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***THE SOCIALLY ISOLATED CHILD AT SCHOOL***

by

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**PROMOTER: PROFESSOR G BESTER**

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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my mother  
(Krishnawathie Budhal) and my late father (Sookai S Budhal)  
for the educational inspirations they  
instilled in me.

I declare that : " **THE SOCIALLY ISOLATED CHILD AT SCHOOL** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references."

  
R S BUDHAL

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Rishichand S Budhal  
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Degree : DOCTOR OF EDUCATION  
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## **SUMMARY**

The phenomenon of social isolation among school children in most instances goes unnoticed by both teachers and parents and this oversight could have serious negative restraints on the socially isolated child's cognitive, affective, moral, personality and social development. Social isolation can be caused either through being rejected or neglected by the peer group.

This study was carried out among primary and secondary school learners to determine the extent to which these children are socially isolated; and to identify factors contributing to learners' social isolation. The aim of the study is to provide teachers and parents with a foundation and rationale for effective intervention.

A literature study was done to identify the factors influencing social isolation. Some of the factors identified were: social competence, self-esteem, psychological well-being, intelligence, academic achievement, moral values, physical disability, sports participation, self-perceived physical attractiveness, self-perceived physical disability, marital status of parents, parental supervision, parental acceptance, parental autonomy granting and parental conflict.

All aspects of development (namely, physical, cognitive, affective, personality, moral and social) were studied in relation to the phenomenon of social isolation.

By means of an empirical investigation, it was found after a regression analysis that **self-esteem**, **obedience** and **social competence** accounted for most of the variance in social isolation for primary school learners and in the case of secondary school learners, **social competence**, **family supervision** and **self-esteem**. The two most common factors were social competence and self-esteem. From the empirical findings it was also noted that learners' home language and grade were also associated with social isolation.

The educational implications of the findings of the literature and the empirical study are discussed and guidelines given to assist teachers and parents to identify and eliminate the factors contributing to the development of isolation among school learners. If both parents and teachers take cognisance of these recommendations and try to implement them, it should help children in their self-actualisation and facilitate their attainment of adulthood with the least developmental restraints.

#### **KEY CONCEPTS:**

**Social isolation, peer rejection, peer neglect, primary school learners, secondary school learners, physical development, cognitive development, affective development, moral development, personality development, prevention and treatment of social isolation**

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## Chapter 1.

### **Analysis of the problem and research programme**

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

While teaching at a school situated in a socio-economically deprived environment, it became apparent that there were certain children who appeared to be friendless and socially isolated during school hours. This observation has serious implications for a child's general development. To become a fully developed adult one has to actualise several developmental aspects, one being the social aspect. If a child's social development is hampered, it may not only result in social isolation, but can also affect other developmental aspects. Broadly speaking, the whole self-actualisation process will be affected.

The actualisation of one's potential to the fullest depends on the presence of others. Schneider and Leitenberg (1989:113), Lew et al (1986:477), Fujinaga et al (1990:39), Earn and Sobol (1991:114), Byrnes (1985:97), Petersen and Moe (1984:391) and Christopher et al (1991:23) all concur that being isolated affects one's self-actualisation process.

In the case of learners, the presence of peers, parents and teachers is indispensable to their self-actualisation process. Bearing this in mind, it can be said that many learners may be at a disadvantage because they are socially isolated.

According to Hancock (1986:3), "loneliness equals failure, having people around us equals success". Taking this statement to its logical conclusion then, being isolated can hinder a person's psychological well-being. Thus learners who either form poor relationships or have difficulty in forming sound relationships with either their parents, peers and teachers, will inevitably suffer developmental restraints while others progress towards adulthood normally.

It is important to distinguish between the terms "loneliness", "positive solitude", "emotional isolation" and "social isolation" since they are sometimes used interchangeably.

From the available literature, "loneliness" seems to be the broad term that embraces all the other concepts, namely "positive solitude", "emotional" and "social isolation". According to Rae (1991:7), people experience loneliness differently and due to the inconsistency, the feeling of loneliness cannot be clearly identified. It is unlike an emotion with distinct feelings that have observable and consistent physiological reactions, such as anger, where people's blood pressure goes up, or they clench their fists. Loneliness has no consistent, unique physiological expression. Rae (1991:7) found that sufferers describe loneliness as anything from feelings of emptiness and boredom to the experience of anxiety and desperation.

According to Andersson et al (1987:126), loneliness consists of at least two distinct dimensions, emotional isolation and social isolation. Emotional isolation can be seen as the absence of an attachment figure in one's life, while social isolation may be regarded as the absence of a place in an accepting community. Thus the emotional dimension refers to a deficiency in socioemotional bonding, while the social dimension refers to the lack of a recognised social role.

Vincenzi and Grabosky (1987:258) support the view of loneliness as having two dimensions, but finds that emotional and social loneliness are significantly correlated and share a sizable common core of experience.

Having distinguished between loneliness, social isolation and emotional isolation, it is now necessary to examine what is meant by the term "social isolation".

Rubin et al (1993:519) define social isolation as the lack of social interactive behaviour and rejection or isolation by the peer group. Gottman (1977:513) also defines social isolation as a relatively low frequency of peer interaction, low levels of peer acceptance or high levels of rejection.

From Gottman and Rubin's definitions then, social isolation can result from either peer rejection or neglect by the peer group.

Furthermore Rubin et al (1993:519) and Byrnes (1984:272) draw a wider distinction between social isolates who are rejected and those who are neglected. According to them, rejected children

are often characterised as aggressive, disruptive, bothersome and defiant, and are seen in a categorically negative light as misfits in the social matrix of the classroom. In contrast, the second group includes children whose isolation is not obvious. They are forgotten or ignored and have no friends, but few complaints are heard about them. These children are often referred to as withdrawn or neglected children. Lewis and Sugai (1993:61) define them as children who have a low frequency of social involvement with peers during activities when peer interaction opportunities are at their peak (for example, during recess).

According to these definitions of social isolation, socially isolated children are those who have low levels of interactive involvement with their peers either through being rejected or neglected.

"Positive solitude" is another form of loneliness, but in this case people are neither rejected nor neglected by people around them. For these people, "isolation" is by choice, they enjoy and prefer their own company.

According to Byrnes (1984:374), social isolates feel deeply hurt, depressed or embittered by their peers' rejection or neglect, and this may influence other aspects of their social life. Petersen and Moe (1984:391), Rubin and Mills (1988:916), Rubin et al (1993:518), Bullock (1992:93), Asher and Wheeler (1985:495) and Christopher et al (1991:23) stress that socially isolated and withdrawn children are at risk of being dropouts and social delinquents at school. Withdrawn and socially isolated children are at risk of a variety of adjustment problems in later life (Lew et al 1986:477). Difficulty with peer relationships during childhood and adolescence has been linked to later development problems in such diverse realms as academic achievement, antisocial behaviour, psychological disturbance and physical health.

At present there are a significant number of children at school who are socially isolated either through being neglected or rejected. According to Bullock (1992:92), research indicates that approximately 6 to 11 percent of elementary school age children have no friends or receive no friendship nominations from peers. This has led to continued research on these children.

With the introduction of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) (**Curriculum 2005**) in South Africa, the ability to form relationships and work with others is of paramount importance. The teaching

methodology of this new curriculum is based mainly on group work . Thus, it would be extremely difficult for social isolates to benefit from this new type of education because of their inability to form relationships or work together with others in groups.

According to Rosenthal (1993:112), there is both an emotional and cognitive necessity for friendship in every child. He stresses that any child who, for whatever reasons, is friendless, is at "risk" both emotionally and educationally.

Jeremy (1987:22) concurs and states that the stress and trauma of being alone and separated from the mainstream of society can be devastating. Applying this statement to the school situation, there is an urgent need for school teachers to identify and eliminate the factors contributing to the development of isolation among school learners. In this way teachers will create a conducive environment to help children build healthy relationships among peers and teachers. This will eventually help children in their self-actualisation process, and more especially in meeting the challenge of working in groups as required in outcomes-based education. To achieve this goal, Bullock (1992:92) stresses the need for more research on the consequences of peer rejection in order to provide teachers with the foundation and rationale for effective intervention.

## **1.2 ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM**

The prevalence of social isolation among school children is a growing concern for educationists, psychologists and sociologists (Crick and Ladd 1993:224, Bullock 1992:92, Rubin et al 1993:518, Inderbitzen-Pisaruk et al 1992:152, Evans and Eder 1993:139 and Fujinaga et al 1990:39). However, each discipline emphasises different aspects of the phenomenon "social isolation". Sociologists are mainly concerned with the causal aspect of the phenomenon and focus primarily on environmental factors. Psychologists are mainly concerned with the emotional effects and study ways of identifying and treating isolates, while educationists are generally concerned with the effects of social isolation on the self-actualisation process of the child. Although each discipline recognises the contribution made by the others, there is still a definite need for an integrated approach to examine the causes, effects and treatment of social isolation.

So far, research has concentrated mainly on the treatment of social isolation (Jupp & Griffiths 1990:165, Sheridan et al 1990:33, Guevremont et al 1989:32, Christopher et al 1991:22, Wetchler 1990:29, Lewis and Sugai 1993:61, Luduc 1987:1, Rosenthal 1993:112 and Roe 1993:113), but little research is available on the factors affecting social isolation. According to Asher and Wheeler (1985:500) and Inderbitzen-Pisaruk et al (1992:152), more research is needed on the causal factors of social isolation. In addition, Asher and Wheeler (1985:500) found that considerable research exists on adult feelings of loneliness but relatively little research has been done with children.

Loneliness or isolation can be explained from the individualistic and socio-cultural perspective (Hancock 1986:12). The main difference between the two perspectives would seem to be in the premise of causation. While the individualistic perspective places the problem of loneliness within the individual as the source, the social-cultural perspective focuses on the external groups.

Apparently there is no holistic approach to understanding the problem of social isolation. A more comprehensive approach, taking into account the causal factors, the effects of social isolation on learners and the methods of intervention and treatment would be useful. Such a study would need to adopt an interactional approach, employing both the individualistic and social-cultural perspectives to study the factors influencing social isolation. A comprehensive study like that would provide teachers with the necessary background and rationale for effective intervention. Evans and Eder (1993:139) note that researchers have recently shifted their focus of study from a restrictive to a more extensive one and turned their attention to situational and environmental factors (such as type of families, styles of parenting, and language of communication) that affect social isolation.

The following are among the available research findings on the causal factors of social isolation:

- Evans and Eder (1993:166) found that the three main areas in which negative valuations were made by learners who rejected their peers were clustered around appearance, gender, behaviour, and mental activity.

- Sears et al (1991:292) found several personality factors to be linked to loneliness. Lonely people tend to be shy, more self-conscious and less assertive. Lonely people always have low self-esteem, and in some cases, poor social skills. Loneliness is also associated with anxiety and depression.
- Newcomb and Brady (in Panella and Henggeler 1986:10) found that adolescents who have low social competence and low positive affect may either form unhealthy friendships or no friendships.
- Hymel (1990:2018) found a positive correlation between negative self-perceptions and social isolation.
- Evans and Elder (1993:141) found that both low academic achievement and low levels of perceived attractiveness are associated with lower social status.
- Inderbitzen-Pisaruk et al (1992:151) found that loneliness in midadolescent males could be predicted from three variables: low self-esteem, the perception of uncontrollability in non-interpersonal situations, and self-perceptions of poor social skills. In the case of midadolescent females, the best multiple predictions of loneliness were self-perception of poor social skills and high social anxiety.
- Byrnes and Yamamoto (1983:22) found poor low self-concept, cautiousness and anxiety to be characteristic of socially withdrawn children.
- Polansky et al (1985:39) found that children in neglectful families are socially isolated.

Although there does not appear to be a comprehensive picture of the factors affecting the development of social isolation in children, Byrnes (1984:374) found that there were fairly well-established concomitants of low social status per se. According to her:

- Mental health has consistently and significantly been related to classroom social position. Those in low status positions are judged by adults as having poorer mental health.



- Numerous studies have demonstrated an intimate relationship in children between their social relations and academic performance. Children with low social status appear to have poor academic achievement .
- There is a tendency for children with low social status to have more negative attitudes towards themselves.
- Children with good social relations (high sociometric status) have more positive attitudes toward teachers and friends than those with lower sociometric status.

The above findings suggest an undeniable relationship between low social acceptance, on the one hand, and less satisfactory mental health, reduced actualisation of academic potential, low self-esteem, and less positive attitudes towards school, on the other. However, the direction of causation is rarely determinable. According to Byrnes (1984:374), a circular nature of these variables is possible, for instance, poor self-esteem is likely to increase the chances of rejection, while rejection probably diminishes self-esteem. However, Brage et al (1993:690) found loneliness to be inversely related to self-esteem, where low self-esteem was found to be embedded in an interrelated set of self-defeating cognitions and behaviours that impair social competence and increase the risk of loneliness.

The foregoing indicates that a number of factors relate to social isolation but it is not clear which could be considered the most important. Furthermore, it is not clear whether the importance of these factors can change during the child's development. There is no research evidence available to suggest that the factors related to social isolation in the primary school will also be those affecting social isolation of the adolescent.

The scant research findings on the causal factors of social isolation indicate that there is definitely a need for more research on the onset and development of social isolation among school children. Such studies would definitely help educators and parents to become aware of how they could play an active role in preventing their learners and children from becoming victims of such an unhealthy and unwanted process during their stages of development.

### **1.3 FORMAL STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Social isolation among children appears to be influenced by various factors . These factors could have an independent, combined or circular effect on the onset and development of social isolation. From this, the following problem questions can be formulated:

- What factors relate to social isolation among primary and secondary school learners?
- What factors can be considered the most important in explaining social isolation among primary and secondary school learners?

### **1.4 AIM OF THE STUDY**

A literature study will be carried out with the following aims:

- To understand the development of the primary school child and adolescent.
- To obtain a theoretical background on the formation of relationships during the socialisation process of the primary school child and adolescent.
- To identify the possible factors influencing the onset and development of social isolation among school children.
- To examine the various preventative measures and treatment of social isolation in school children.

Secondly, an empirical investigation will be carried out with the aim of determining:

- the relationships between the factors identified in the literature study and social isolation among primary school children and adolescents

- the most important factors in social isolation among primary school learners and adolescents

## **1.5 THE RESEARCH PROGRAMME**

In chapter 2, the development of the primary school child will be investigated. In order to examine the holistic development of the child, the physical, cognitive, affective, personality and moral aspects of development will be studied .

In chapter 3, the socialisation process of the primary school child will be studied. The different theories of social development will be examined and possible answers sought to why the primary school child could become a victim of social isolation.

Chapter 4 will deal with the development of the secondary school child. As in chapter 2, the physical, cognitive, affective, personality and moral aspects of development will be investigated.

Chapter 5 will deal with the socialisation process of the adolescent.

An empirical investigation into the factors that influence the development of social isolates among primary and secondary school children will be discussed in chapter 6. A questionnaire will be administered to learners to identify social isolates and to measure certain factors identified in chapters 2 to 5. The questionnaire, sample and procedure of the empirical investigation will be discussed in chapter 6.

Chapter 7 will analyse the results of the empirical investigation . Conclusions will be drawn as to the kind of effect certain factors have on the development of social isolation among school children. The major factors in social isolation among primary and secondary school learners will be identified.

Chapter 8 will deal with the educational implications of the research findings and provide guidelines on intervention and techniques to treat social isolation. Areas for future research will be suggested.

### **The development of the primary school child**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

According to Lindgren (1985:39), the term "development" refers to changes in size, character, function or behaviour of the human organism. There are at least four aspects of development: physical, cognitive, social and affective. Physical development is the most basic of all development. This kind of development is the most visible evidence of physical maturation, which includes increases in height, weight and body build. Physical development is said to be basic to all other aspects of development because the ability to engage in intellectually and socially mature behaviour depends on physical maturation. Cognitive development refers to activities that involve thinking, perceiving and/or problem-solving activities that can be considered "intellectual". Social development refers to any form of behaviour that involves relations with others, whereas affective development refers to feelings and attitudes.

The age of the primary school child varies between 6 and 12 years. This chapter will discuss how the above aspects develop during the primary school years. Social development, which is the most important aspect of development for the research topic, will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

#### **2.2 PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILD**

"Physical development" refers to changes in physical characteristics such as height, weight, body build and motor development. Physical development is the most basic aspect of development since it sets the stage for cognitive, affective and social developmental changes to take place in the individual. According to Lindgren (1985:68), the timetable of physical development sets a pace that determines to a considerable degree, when other types of developmental changes will occur. When looking at the child's physical development, it is therefore necessary to also look at its concomitant effects on the other aspects of development.

### **2.2.1 Growth in height and weight**

One of the most striking features of the development of the primary school child is that it is a period of slow and relatively uniform growth until the changes of puberty begin (Hurlock 1980:158 and Smart and Smart 1982:300). Hamachek (1990:78) mentions that physical development during this period is primarily a move toward greater balance of proportion rather than a sheer increase in size. For example, by eight years of age, the arms and legs are nearly 50 percent longer than they were at the age of two, yet overall height has increased by only 25 percent.

According to Papalia and Olds (1993:375), research findings indicate that changes in height and weight are not completely parallel in boys and girls. By the time girls are nine years old, they have, after a slight dip, caught up with boys in height but they fall steadily behind in weight until, at an average age of 10 and 11, they overtake boys.

Hurlock (1980:158) maintains that body build, good health, nutrition and emotional tension tend to affect height and weight in the primary school child. According to her, the ectomorph, who has a long, slender body, can be expected to weigh less than a mesomorph, who has a heavier body. Children with mesomorphic builds grow faster than those with ectomorphic or endomorphic builds and reach puberty sooner. Also, the better the health and nutrition, the bigger children tend to be, age for age, as compared with those whose nutrition and health are poor. Papalia and Olds (1993:376) also conclude that children from more affluent homes tend to be bigger and more mature than children from poorer homes. With regard to emotional tension, placid children are reported to grow faster than those who are emotionally disturbed, although emotional disturbance has a greater effect on weight than on height.

During the primary school phase some of the bodily disproportions evident in a preschool child now begin to disappear (Hurlock 1980:159). The child's head is still proportionately too large for the rest of the body, some of the facial disproportions disappear as the mouth and jaws become larger, the forehead broadens and flattens, the lips fill out, and the nose becomes large and acquires more shape. The trunk elongates and becomes slimmer, the neck becomes longer, the

chest broadens, the abdomen flattens, the arms and legs lengthen, and the hands and feet grow longer, but at a slow rate.

### **2.2.2 Abnormal growth**

Two types of abnormal growth patterns can occur during the primary school child phase. Firstly, growth could be below normal, which is evident in children who are shorter than their classmates. One of the reasons for this could be poor health and nutrition, while another reason could be biological, where the body fails to produce enough growth hormone. The other type of abnormal growth is obesity. According to Papalia and Olds (1993:380), obesity is when people become overweight through consuming more calories than they can expend. Evans and Eder (1993:148) found that being obese can have a damaging effect on the child psychologically. Obese children are often considered unattractive and less popular. They are also more likely to have a negative body image and since people's body image greatly influences their overall self-image, being overweight and unattractive can affect their affective, social and personality development (Greene 1990:34; Magnusson 1992:121; Rauste-von Wright 1989:72).

According to Hamachek (1990:80), one of the reasons why overweight children are viewed as less popular and have more social problems is that they are not able to run and move as freely and agilely in play as their peers. Because they are not able to keep up as easily, they may be excluded more frequently from most activities and this leads to a feeling of being rejected which, in turn, fosters a negative self-concept.

From this it can be concluded that obese children who are regarded by their peers as being unattractive are more likely at risk of becoming social isolates. Lerner et al (1991:300), Thornton and Ryckman (1991:85) and Page (1992:150) found that there is a positive relationship between physical unattractiveness and sociometric status: the more attractive children are, the more popular they are. These findings indicate that since obese children are regarded as being unattractive by their peers, they are likely to be less popular, rejected and isolated. Both Evans and Elder (1993:148) and Rubin et al (1993:531) also found a positive relationship between social isolation and physical appearance. According to them, children whose physical appearance was not within the socially acceptable range were most often isolated by their peer group.

Although there are no clear findings on the effects of being below the normal growth of development, it may be assumed that these children could also suffer the same effects as obese ones. Because of their shortened height and body build, these children could also become emotionally disturbed at not being able to do what their normal counterparts do, such as being selected for soccer or netball teams. Being left out in certain activities and games could result in a feeling of rejection, which, in turn could result in social isolation.

According to Page (1992:154), the important implication of these findings for the educator, is that educators should emphasize the inherent value of young people as unique human beings. They should try to develop a feeling of unconditional self-worth by making individuals realise that they are important and worthwhile regardless of performance or appearance, simply because they are unique human beings. They should help normal children to be accepting to those who are less attractive in terms of size and weight. Teachers and sports organisers should, wherever possible, try to include children who are under or over sized in games and sports so as to create a feeling of acceptance in these children.

### **2.2.3 Motor development**

According to Hamachek (1990:83), gross motor (large muscle) skills outstrip fine motor (small muscle) coordination in the early primary school child. This, however, changes during the later stages when children in Grades 6 to 8 (Std 4-6) gradually exhibit greater smoothness and command of small-muscle expression, which is reflected in better coordination in activities ranging from handwriting to batting a ball. Better detail work and longer periods of concentration can be expected from most children in these higher grades. However, energy levels remain high, making it difficult for children to sit still for extended periods. The relevance of this for teachers is that they should allow a certain amount of time for moving about and talking.

From his findings Hurlock (1980:161) concluded that by the time they reach late childhood, most children are predominantly right or left-handed and that changing handedness is far from easy. In addition many left-handed children become ambidextrous in late childhood, though there is a tendency to favour the left hand. According to Hurlock, trying to change the handedness of primary school children could be difficult and emotionally disturbing, and teachers should not insist

that children replace left-handed with right-handed skills. Instead they should encourage left-handers to learn new skills with their right hands and only when children show a strong desire to change from the use of the left to the use of the right hand, should teachers help or encourage them to do so. Kidd (1981:30) found that being left-handed could lead to social isolation. He asserts that the formation of clubs for the overweight, for girls over six feet tall and or for the left-handed are increasing, which indicates how painfully isolating these factors can be.

It is therefore important for teachers not to allow left-handed learners to be excluded from class activities. Activities should be designed not to require the rigid use of the right hand only. Right-handedness should never be imposed on learners. Often the activities (eg. drawing, woodwork) are "ambidexterous" but the way the seating, equipment or workplace is arranged favours right-handedness. Teachers should take the necessary precautions to prevent such a situation from prevailing at schools.

### **2.3 COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILD.**

Cognitive development refers to the changes or progress made by children in their ability to think and understand their world. According to Mussen et al (1990:262), the processes of thinking and knowing, called cognition, include :

- attention
- perception
- interpretation
- classification and remembering of information
- evaluation of ideas
- inferring of principles and deducing rules
- imagination of possibilities
- generation of strategies
- fantasising

Before looking at recent developments and findings in the cognitive development of the primary school child, we shall examine Piaget, Bruner, the information-processing and Vygotsky's theories



of cognitive development. Since Piaget's theory of cognitive development is the best known and widely accepted theory in the field of child development, his theory will be discussed in greater detail than the others.

### **2.3.1 Piaget's theory of cognitive development**

For a comprehensive account of Piaget's theory of cognitive development, it is necessary to examine the principal concepts of his theory and his stages of cognitive development.

#### *2.3.1.1 Principal concepts of Piaget's theory of cognitive development*

According to Slavin (1991:26), the four main concepts of Piaget's theory are *schemes* or *schemata*, *assimilation*, *accommodation* and *equilibration*.

##### *a) Schemes or schemata*

According to Slavin (1991:26), the pattern of behaviour or thinking that children and adults use in dealing with objects in the world are called schemes. Schemes can be simple, as when a baby knows how to grasp an object within reach, or complex, as when a high school student learns how to approach a mathematical problem. Schemes can also be classified as behavioural (eg, grasping, driving a car) or cognitive (eg, solving problems, categorising concepts). According to Lindgren (1985:44), schemata or schemes are cognitive structures representing what we know about our world, how we view it, and how we act towards it.

It is important to note that the key to the formation of schemata is action on the part of the child in attempting to adapt to the demands of the environment (Child 1986:146).

##### *b) Assimilation*

Slavin (1991:26) describes the process of assimilation as the process of incorporating a new object or event into an existing scheme. It is similar to putting new data into a computer, but, just as data must be correctly coded before being entered into the computer, the object or event to be

assimilated must fit an existing scheme. Therefore, assimilation involves more than simply taking in new information. It also involves the "filtering or modification of input" so that the input fits.

For Gage and Berliner (1988:119), assimilation is like chewing and digesting food in order to transform it into something the body can use. Similarly, assimilation transforms new ideas into something that fits into already existing cognitive structures.

#### c) *Accommodation*

Accommodation, according to Gage and Berliner (1988:119), is the process of changing the cognitive structures so that they fit what is perceived. It is the process of modifying, extending or refining existing cognitive structures so as to come to grips with new or unusual ideas. Rice (1992:90) also defines accommodation as the process of adjusting to new information by creating new structures to replace the old. The following example by Rice clearly distinguishes between the concepts of assimilation and accommodation. Children may see dogs of various kinds (assimilation) and learn that some are safe to pet and others aren't (accommodation). As children acquire more and more information, they change their constructs and accommodate to the world differently.

According to Child (1986:146), Piaget considers that conceptual growth occurs because the child, while actively attempting to adapt to the environment, organises actions into schemata through the process of assimilation and accommodation.

#### d) *Equilibration*

Equilibration is the process of achieving a balance (equilibrium) between schemes and what is encountered. Disequilibrium arises when there is dissonance between reality and a person's comprehension of it, when further accommodation becomes necessary. According to Slavin (1991:27), people naturally try to reduce imbalances by focusing on the stimuli that cause the disequilibrium and developing new schemes or adapting old ones until equilibrium is restored. It is a process on which all learning depends. According to Piaget, when equilibrium is upset, children have the opportunity to grow and develop.

Greenfield (1989:348) found that formal schooling makes children more reflective in the sense that it allows them to weigh opposing factors against one another. This stimulates the growth-producing process of cognitive conflict, which seems to magnify the equilibration process, which is so important in stage transitions.

According to Rice (1992:90), the desire for equilibrium becomes the motivation that pushes children through the four main stages of cognitive development: the sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational and formal operational stages.

With regard to the operation of these concepts (schemes, accommodation, assimilation and equilibration) in the social isolate, we may assume that social withdrawal may restrict the development of social schemes that are necessary for reciprocity in interpersonal situations. Deficits in social schemes would therefore invariably affect accommodation and assimilation within a social milieu and result in social disequilibrium. Social isolates would have difficulty in learning about the ways in which they differ from other children and in accommodating to those differences.

According to Rubin (Bornstein and Lamb 1992:523), Piaget believed that within the peer group context children could experience opportunities to examine conflicting ideas and explanations, to negotiate and discuss multiple perspectives, and to decide to compromise with or reject notions held by peers. These interactive experiences were posited to result in positive and adaptive developmental outcomes for children. In the case of social isolates, these adaptive developmental outcomes would be hindered and this could lead to egocentrism and lack of social cognition.

#### *2.3.1.2 Piaget's stages of cognitive development*

According to Slavin (1991:26), Piaget saw that the development of children's intellectual or cognitive abilities progresses through four distinct stages. Each stage is characterised by the emergence of new abilities, which allows for a major reorganisation in children's thinking. For Piaget, development depends on a large part on children's manipulation of and active interaction with the environment. Thus children who are socially isolated and cannot interact with their environment positively, will be held back in the progression to Piaget's higher developmental

stages. Piaget's four distinct stages are the sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational and formal operational stages.

According to Piaget, people progress through these four stages of cognitive development between birth and adulthood. Each stage is marked by the emergence of new intellectual abilities that allow people to understand the world in increasingly complex ways. Table 2.1 represents an overall insight into these stages with the major accomplishments in each stage.

**TABLE 2.1. PIAGET'S STAGES OF COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT**

<b>Stages</b>	<b>Approx Age</b>	<b>Major Accomplishments</b>
<b>SENSORIMOTOR</b>	<b>BIRTH TO 2 YRS</b>	Formation of "concept permanence" and gradual progression from reflex behaviour to goal-directed behaviour.
<b>PREOPERATIONAL</b>	<b>2 TO 7 YEARS</b>	Development of the ability to use symbols to represent objects in the world. Thinking remains egocentric and centred.
<b>CONCRETE OPERATIONAL</b>	<b>7-11 YEARS</b>	Improvement in the ability to think logically. New abilities include the use of operations that are reversible. Thinking is decentred and problem solving is less restricted by egocentrism. Abstract thinking is not possible.
<b>FORMAL OPERATIONS</b>	<b>11 YRS TO ADULthood</b>	Abstract and purely symbolic thinking is possible. Problems can be solved through the use of systematic experimentation.
<b>Source: Slavin (1991:38)</b>		

Since the focus of concern in this chapter is on the cognitive development of the primary school child (7 to 12 years of age), only the concrete operational stage will be discussed in detail.

However, a brief exposition of the stages preceding the concrete operational stage will be given. The formal operational stage will be discussed in chapter 4.

a) *Sensorimotor stage*

According to Gage and Berliner (1988:108), this stage is characterised by the child's growth in ability in simple perceptual and motor activities. This stage covers the period during which children move from a newborn's reflexive activity to a more highly organised kind of activity. In this stage children learn to:

- see themselves as different from the objects around them
- seek stimulation in the light and sound around them
- try to prolong interesting experiences

According to Lindgren (1985:46), during this phase infants also achieve *object permanence*, which is the awareness that an object has an existence independent of their own actions and perceptions. In this phase children learn that objects do not cease to exist when they suddenly go out of the direct observational field.

b) *Preoperational stage*

According to Rice (1992:91), at this stage children acquire language and learn to use the symbols that represent the environment. Preoperational children can deal with their work symbolically, but still cannot think logically. Lindren (1985:47) states that the thinking of children during this period is characterised by *irreversibility*, in that they are not able to go back and rethink a process or concept. Because of this inability, they are inclined to say, for example, that liquid poured from one container into another of a different size or shape has increased or decreased in volume. This failure to conserve, as Piaget termed it, is related to children's inability to think back and imagine how the liquid looked earlier and to recall that nothing was done to the liquid to change its quantity.

According to Mussen et al (1990:274), at this stage children's thought and speech is often egocentric, in other words, they do not understand that other people have a different perspective or point of view to what they have.

c) *Concrete operational stage*

According to Rice (1992:91), at this stage children show some capacity for logical reasoning, though it relates only to things actually experienced. They can form a number of mental operations. They can understand **class inclusion** relationships, **serialisation** (grouping objects by size or alphabetical order), **hierarchical classifications**, and the principles of **symmetry** and **reciprocity** (eg, two sisters are sisters to each other). They understand the principle of **conservation**: that you can pour a liquid from a tall to a flat dish without changing the total volume of the liquid.

Child (1986:152) state that, according to Piaget, the properties capable of being conserved appear in a particular sequence. Conservation of substance, for instance, occurs around the age of seven to eight years and precedes the conservation of weight (around nine to eleven years), which, in turn, precedes the conservation of volume (at about twelve years of age). Also number conservation appears before area.

Mussen et al (1990:276) state that the phenomenon of **decentration** is also an important noticeable event of concrete operational thinkers. Children can focus their attention on several attributes of an object or event simultaneously and understand the relationships among dimensions or attributes. They understand that objects have more than one dimension (eg, weight and size) and that these dimensions are separable. A pebble is both small and light, and a car is both large and heavy.

Mussen et al (1990:277) also state that during the process of **seriation** (arranging objects according to some quantified dimension) children have also obtained an important logical principle, that of **transitivity**, which states that there are certain fixed relationships among the qualities of objects. For example, if A is longer than B and B is longer than C, then it must be true

that A is longer than C. Children in the stage of concrete operations recognise the validity of this rule even if they have never seen objects A, B, and C.

Child (1986:153) notes that at the concrete operational stage children still fail to distinguish between hypotheses and reality. Instead of testing hypotheses against evidence, a child will often adjust the facts to meet the hypothesis. This kind of operation is known as making assumptive realities. According to Elkind (Child 1986:153), one important assumptive reality is that of cognitive conceit. The following is an example of how this works: children come to recognise that adults are not infallible. They are sometimes wrong and the child is sometimes right. But this becomes distorted: if adults are wrong in one or two things, they are wrong in most things, while if children at this stage are correct in one thing, they think they will be correct in almost everything - hence cognitive conceit.

In Mussen et al (1990:280), the concrete operational child is classified as having advanced beyond the child at the preoperational stage in reasoning, problem solving and logic, but where much of the thinking continues to be restricted to the here and now of concrete objects and relations. Although children at this stage can conserve quantity and number and can order and classify real objects and things, they cannot reason as well about abstractions, hypothetical prepositions, or imaginary events.

### *2.3.1.3      Relevance of Piaget's theory of cognitive development for the primary school child's development of social relationships*

A close examination of Piaget's theory of cognitive development reveals that the concepts of schemes/schemata, disequilibrium and decentration play a significant role in the primary school child's social development. As mentioned earlier, it is evident that social schemes play an important role in children's interpersonal relationships. Children who lack such necessary cognitive structures may become predisposed to becoming a social isolate. Such a child may not have the necessary social cognitive structures that would enable him/her to interact successfully with his/her peers and others. They may lack the ability to interpret other people's actions accurately in a social situation. For example, children with restricted social cognitive structures

may interpret a joke inaccurately and feel that the people around them are having fun at their expense and withdraw from such a situation.

Children who lack the necessary social skills to enable them to accommodate and assimilate elements in a new social environment may experience what Piaget calls a social disequilibrium, resulting in social isolation. According to Strommen et al (1977:216), early peer relationships are the source of the development of social accommodation and social cognition, which, in turn, are the basis for the changing quality of children's friendships.

Children's inability to decentration can restrict their social development. Decentration involves the ability to focus attention on several attributes of an object or event simultaneously and understand the relationships among dimensions or attributes. Similarly, in a social situation, children who do not have the capacity to realise that other people's views can be different to theirs may find themselves in a conflict situation. If children consider their viewpoint as the only correct and acceptable one, it may result in conflict with others and even rejection.

### **2.3.2 Bruner's theory of cognitive development**

Bruner's theory is concerned with the way children come to represent cognitively the world into which they are born. According to Gage and Berliner (1988:121), Bruner observed the following characteristics of cognitive growth in children, which helped him develop his theory:

- Intellectual growth is characterised by increasing independence of responses from stimuli. Children are at first under rigid stimulus control. They respond in set ways to various stimuli. Over time they become increasingly independent of stimuli in the responses they make and the form those responses take.
- Growth depends on a development of an internal information processing and storage system that can describe reality. Unless children learn a symbol system, such as language, with which to represent the world, they can never predict, extrapolate, or hypothesise novel outcomes.



- Intellectual development involves an increasing capacity to say to ourselves and others in words or with symbols, what we have done and what we will do.
- Systematic interactions between a tutor and a learner are necessary for cognitive development. Simply being born into a culture is not enough for full intellectual development. A designated teacher must interpret and share the culture with the child.
- Language is the key to cognitive development. It is through language that others communicate with us, teaching us their conceptions of the world. It is also through language that we communicate our conceptions of the world to others and question the way the world functions.

From these observations, Bruner identified three stages of growth in the way that children come to represent in their minds the world around them. The first is the **enactive stage**, in which the child understands the environment through action. The enactive stage is where holding, moving, biting, rubbing and touching provide needed experience with the objects of the world.

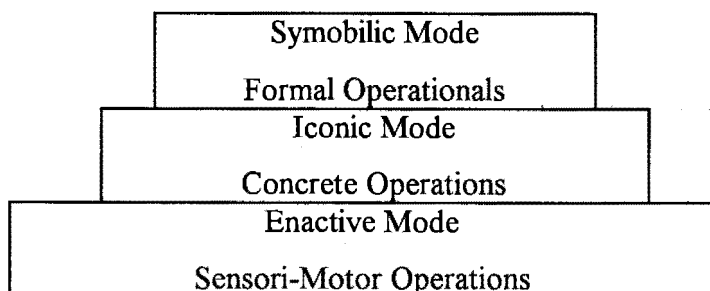
The next cognitive level - the **iconic stage** - is a great advancement. It is the level at which information is carried by imagery. Visual memory is developed, but the child still makes decisions based on sensory impressions, not language.

Finally the child reaches the **symbolic stage**, where understanding through action and perception gives way to understanding of the world by means of symbolic systems. Language, logic and mathematics come into play here.

According to Bruner, children move from enactive to iconic to symbolic stages of development, and with age and experience, the symbolic system usually becomes dominant.

Bruner's stages of cognitive growth coincide with Piaget's stages of cognitive development (Biddinger 1993:149). This relationship is clearly depicted in figure 2.1.

**FIGURE.2.1 A MODEL BASED ON THE COMPARISON OF BRUNER'S THEORY OF INSTRUCTION AND PIAGET'S COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT**



**Source:** (Biddinger:1993:149)

Biddinger stresses that it is very important to understand children's cognitive level during teaching. Without this understanding, children may be given information beyond their cognitive level which may create anxiety.

#### *2.3.2.1 Implications of Bruner's theory for the socially isolated primary school child*

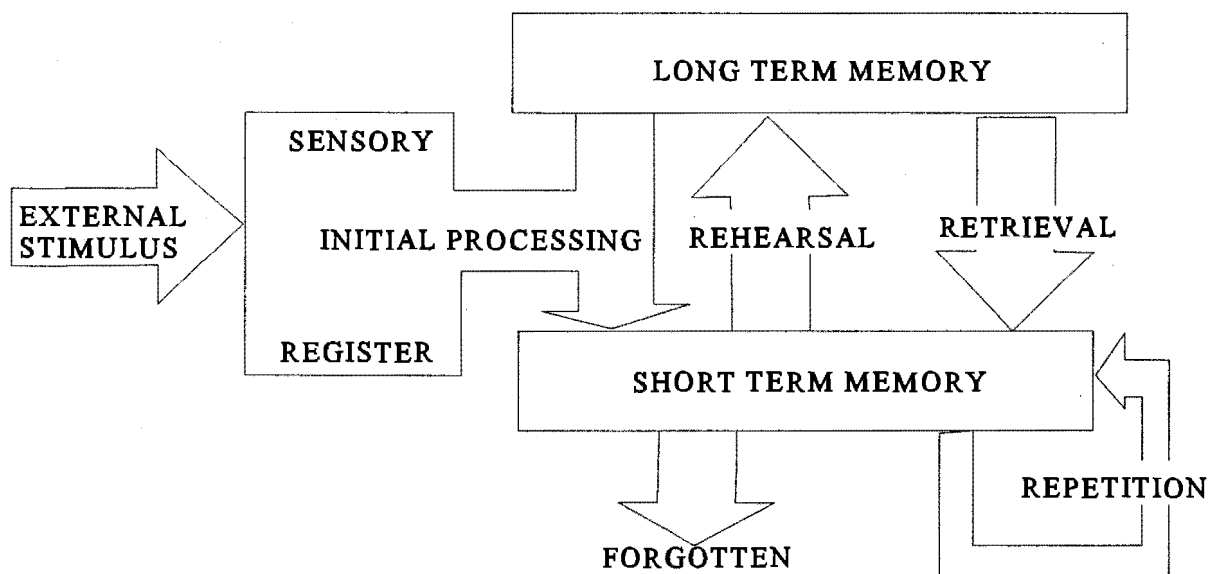
According to Gage and Berrliner (1988:122), Bruner's theory stresses the need for systematic interactions to take place between the tutor and learner in order to facilitate cognitive development. With regard to the socially isolated and withdrawn child, it can be assumed that cognitive development can be hindered since not much interaction takes place between the child and the teacher. Biddinger (1993:153) also highlights that learner participation, no matter what their age, is very important when educating them. From this it may be concluded that because of the lack of participation on the part of the socially isolated children in the classroom, they will not reach the cognitive milestones their counterparts achieve.

Taking into account the views of both Gage and Biddinger, it would seem that Bruner's theory of cognitive development is important because it gives an insight into how socially isolated children could become disadvantaged in their cognitive development.

### 2.3.3 Information-processing approach to cognitive development

The information-processing approach to cognitive development pays special attention to memory. Proponents of this approach contend that as cognitive development advances, so does memory. According to Lindgren (1985:169), the information-processing approach sees the mind as a computer. The mind takes new information, processes and stores it, and makes it available for some future occasion. Just as a computer has compartments in which information is processed and stored, so too does the mind. It has structures or compartments which can process and store information. Figure 2.2 illustrates the way this cognitive processing chain operates.

**FIGURE 2.2 MODEL OF THE INFORMATION-PROCESSING COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT**



**Source:** Slavin (1991:131)

A simple explanation of the sequence of information-processing is as follows: information to be remembered must first reach a person's senses, then be attended to and transferred from the sensory register to the short-term memory, then be processed again for transfer to long-term memory.

Information can be made to last longer in the short-term memory through repetition. Information that is not subjected to repetition may be forgotten very quickly.

The process of maintaining an item in the short-term memory by repetition is called rehearsal. According to Slavin (1991:136), rehearsal is important in learning because the longer the item remains in the short-term memory, the greater the chance that it will be transferred to long-term memory.

According to Papalia and Olds (1993:407), the ability to remember improves greatly by middle childhood, partly because children's memory capacity - the amount of information that can be remembered - increases, and partly because they learn to use a variety of strategies, or deliberate plans, to help them remember.

In summary we find that the model has generated a great deal of knowledge about how children's cognitive structures and processes work. One of the implications for teachers is that they must allocate time for rehearsal during classroom lessons. Teaching too much information too rapidly is ineffective. If learners are not given enough time to mentally rehearse each new piece of information, allowing it to be transferred to the long-term memory, it will easily be forgotten. Teachers should stop a lesson and give learners a few moments to think over and mentally rehearse what they have learnt. This will help the learners to process the information in the short-term memory and thereby establish it in the long-term memory.

#### *2.3.3.1      Relevance of the information-processing model to the development of social isolation*

According to Bornstein (1992:55), the way children interpret and process information about their social worlds plays a causal role in determining the production of social behaviour. These behaviours, in turn, lead to peer acceptance or rejection.

Using a social information-processing model, Rubin and Krasnor (Bornstein and Lamb 1992:551) give an example of the particular sequence of thinking children follow when faced with an inter-

personal dilemma (eg, making new friends or acquiring an object from someone else). The steps are as follows:

- First, children may select a social goal.
- Second, they examine the task environment, which involves reading and interpreting all the relevant social cues.
- Third, they access and select strategies. This involves generating plans of action for achieving the perceived social goal, and choosing the most appropriate one for the specific situation.
- Fourth, they implement the chosen strategy. This involves assessing the situation to determine the relative success of the chosen course of action in achieving the social goal. If the initial strategy fails, the child may repeat it or may select and enact a new strategy, or abandon the situation entirely.

Dodge (Bornstein and Lamb 1992:551) presents a similar model which consists of five stages, namely:

- encoding social cues
- interpreting encoded cues
- accessing and generating potential responses
- evaluating and selecting responses
- enacting the chosen responses

In both models rejected and socially isolated children demonstrate characteristic deficits or qualitative differences in performance at various stages.

According to Bornstein and Lamb (1992:552), research shows that aggressive and rejected children generate qualitatively different solutions to interpersonal dilemmas, such as agonistic or bribe strategies, and are less likely than their non-aggressive or more popular counterparts to suggest prosocial strategies in response to social problems in acquiring object or initiating friendship. Withdrawn children use more nonassertive social strategies to solve their interpersonal dilemmas.

There is also a difference in the social-cognitive profiles of withdrawn-isolated and aggressive-rejected children. Rejected children often misinterpret ambiguous social stimuli, misblame others and respond with inappropriate anger and hostility, which all leads to peer rejection. Isolated children, have difficulty in interpreting social cues and generating competent solutions to interpersonal dilemmas. Social dilemmas seem to evoke emotionally anxious-fearful reactions in withdrawn children and their inability to overcome this results in an unassertive, submissive social problem-solving style.

To sum up then, the information-processing model compares the brain to a computer and has provided a great deal of information on how children process information about their social worlds and how deficits in the processing steps can lead to social isolation and rejection.

#### **2.3.4 Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development**

Vygotsky's theory emphasises the close relationship between children's cognitive and social development. He notes that children begin learning from the people around them, their social world, which is the source of all their concepts, ideas, facts, skills and attitudes (Gage and Berliner 1988:124).

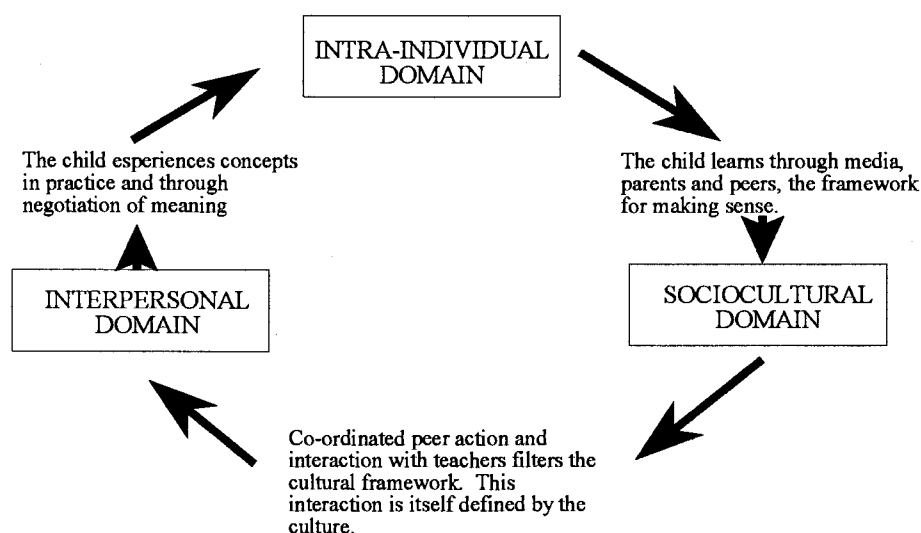
Therefore it would seem that children who do not have healthy relationships with the people around them would have their cognitive development hampered.

Vygotsky's theory stresses the role of interpersonal processes and the role of society in providing the framework within which the child's construction of meaning develops (Smith and Cowie 1991:352). The interaction between individual children, the significant people in their immediate environment and their culture can be represented diagrammatically in Figure 2.3

An important concept in Vygotsky's theory is the zone of proximal development. It is the difference between the two levels of the children's functioning, that is, the level at which children work without adult help and the level where children work with adult help. The former level reflects children's actual development level while the latter reflects their potential level of development through working with a competent nurturing mediation.

According to Vygotsky, the key to advancing children's cognitive development is to find out the dimensions of the zone within which the teacher should work. Children should not be allowed to work too much independently as this would slow down cognitive development.

Vygotsky believed that to develop fully, children must be led systematically into more complex areas with the help of adults or others who have expertise in the area. According to Gage and Berliner (1988:126), in the zone of proximal development, social knowledge (knowledge acquired through social interaction) becomes individual knowledge and individual knowledge grows and becomes more complex.



**FIGURE 2.3 A MODEL FOR THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTRA-INDIVIDUAL, INTERPERSONAL AND SOCIO-CULTURAL DOMAINS**

#### 2.3.4.1 *Evaluation of Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development in relation to the socially isolated child*

Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development is highly relevant to the cognitive development of the socially isolated child. According to Smith and Cowie (1991:349), Vygotsky argues that it is as a result of the social interaction between growing children and other members of their community that children acquire the "tools" of thinking and learning. This would indicate that socially isolated

children's cognitive development would be restricted because of their lack of interaction with others in their environment.

According to Shaffer (1993:258), in Vygotsky's theory, social contributions to cognitive growth are of paramount importance. Vygotsky maintains that many of the truly important "discoveries" that children make are socially mediated (ie. products of collaboration) and take place within a zone of proximal development. Tasks within children's zone of proximal development are too difficult for children to master on their own but can be accomplished with the guidance and encouragement of more skilful associates or peers. With this in mind, Smith and Cowie (1991:362) suggest that peer-tutoring provides a good example of interaction as a necessary condition for cognitive growth since it is through the processes involved in this interaction between tutor and tutee that the less expert child masters a new skill. With regard to socially isolated and withdrawn children, we find that this may not be possible because of their reluctance to work with others.

### **2.3.5 Recent findings on and developments in the cognitive development of the primary school child**

According to Siegler (1994:1), research has done little to explain how changes occur between the different stages of cognitive development as proposed by Piaget, Bruner and other stage theorists. It was found that during the stages of cognitive development, children are depicted as thinking or acting in a certain way for a prolonged period of time then undergoing a brief, rather mysterious, transition, and then acting in a different way for another prolonged period. For example, in the classic conservation-of-liquid quantity problem, children are depicted as believing for several years that pouring water into a taller, thinner beaker changes the quantity. Research has failed to explain how children get from the earlier type of understanding to the later type. In other words their change in thinking has not been clearly explained yet. Stanton (1993:26) also criticises Piagetian theory for failing to account for how and why a child passes from one stage to another.

Siegler recognises that in almost all cognitive developmental theories the emphasis has been on identifying sequences of one-to-one correspondences between ages and ways of thinking or



acting, rather than on specifying how the changes occur. In order to overcome the problem, Siegler holds that the concept of **cognitive variability** be taken into account when explaining children's changing patterns of thinking. According to him, variability in children's thinking exists at every level - not just between children of different ages, or between different children of the same age, but also within an individual solving a set of selected problems, within an individual solving the same problem twice, and even within an individual on a single trial. Siegler believes that variability is not just an incidental feature of thinking; it appears to play a critical role in promoting cognitive change.

Research findings continue to support the view that parents play a significant role in the cognitive development of their children. According to Kurtz et al (1993:588), intellectual development depends heavily on the ongoing quality of the parent-child interaction. The unavailable, neglectful parent presents a direct threat to the intellectual development of the child. Low educational aspirations, lack of encouragement to learn, a paucity of language stimulation, nonparticipation in school activities, and unresponsiveness to children's achievements all undermine success in school and further cognitive development. Crouch and Milner's (1993:54) findings also indicate that, compared with matched comparison children, neglected children are reported to demonstrate deficits in measure of language ability and intelligence.

Wentzel and Erdley (1991:321) also stress the importance of parent-child relationships in influencing cognitive development, stating that parents style of discipline affects children's social and emotional development, which contributes to their academic, intellectual and cognitive achievement.

Kovacs and Goldston (1991:389) report that certain depressive symptoms may be particularly disruptive of cognitive functioning. According to the authors, attentional problems that often characterise depressive illness may interfere with the process of mastering new, unfamiliar, or complex academic problems. Also, reduced motivation may make it difficult to engage in learning tasks that are demanding or that require "effortful" processing. This may then slow the rate of acquisition and consolidation of information for long-term memory and also cause depressed learners to perform poorly in timed tests. This academic failure, in turn, is likely to undermine the primary school child's self-esteem and contribute to subsequent negative learning experiences.

This development of a negative self-esteem has serious implications for the socially isolated child. The effects of this negative self-esteem on socially isolated children will be discussed later under the development of self-esteem.

## **2.4 AFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILD**

According to Du Toit and Kruger (1991:116), the affective development of the primary school child is characterised by a greater measure of emotional flexibility and differentiation. Children are still involved but can distance themselves from the events if they wish to do so. By means of greater emotional differentiation, they are able to express a variety of emotions. Their emotions and their expression are therefore more complex, diverse and sophisticated as compared to those of the preprimary school child.

Here we will focus mainly on the emotional development of the primary school child and the possible relationship between certain emotional disturbances and social isolation.

### **2.4.1 The development of emotions of the primary school child**

According to Campos and Campos (1989:395), there is at present a new working definition of emotion compared to the older definition, which treated emotions as mere feelings. According to him, emotions are not mere feelings, but rather processes of establishing, maintaining or disrupting the relations between the person and the internal or external environment when such relations are significant to the individual. In this view, three processes make an event significant to the person:

- the relevance of an event to the person's goals and striving
- the emotional communication from significant others such as their facial, vocal, and gestural actions
- the hedonic nature of certain types of stimulation (ie. whether an event intrinsically hurts, soothes, or produces pleasure)

The major critical implication of this relational approach to understanding emotions is the importance placed on the individual's interaction with the environment. For children who are socially isolated, their poor relationship with others could result in them being caught in a situation that precipitates a state of emotional "numbness". Such children would be in danger of not learning the appropriate emotional reactions to certain stimuli.

According to Dupont (Springthall and Burke 1985:51), children at different levels of psychological development process **affect** according to major referent differences. Dupont denotes the different levels of psychological development as

- impersonal - lack of differentiation between self and others as the source of **affect**
- heteronomous - affect determined by significant adults
- interpersonal - determined by peers
- psychological - determined by one's own reflection and analysis

These findings imply that primary school children's affective development could be hindered if they are social isolates since the processing of affect is also determined by the interpersonal relationships with peers.

Freeman (1994:180) finds that emotions play a vital role in the personal and intellectual development of primary school children. According to her, a negative emotional atmosphere inhibits cognitive development, but positive emotions have a facilitating effect.

Research shows that the family plays a significant role in children's affective development (Jaklewicz 1988:301; Storr 1988:124; Crouch and Milner 1993:62 and Dunn and Brown 1994:121).

Doherty and Needle (1991:329) state that children from disrupted families had lower emotional well being scores than those with continuously married parents. Children from divorced families were found to experience more social, academic and personal adjustment problems than children from non-divorced families and the transition following separation and divorce is highly stressful.

Children between the ages of six and twelve are emotionally vulnerable. Both the content and direction of children's emotional growth are influenced by others (Hamachek 1990:87). What teachers say can dramatically affect children's emotional stability and self-concept development positively or negatively.

Hurlock (1980:165) points out that the common emotional patterns of early and late childhood are similar, but differ in two respects, namely in the kind of situation that gives rise to them and in the form of emotional expression. These changes are the result of broadened experience and learning rather than of motivation. Hurlock also notes that there are variations in the common emotions older children experience and in the way they express these emotions. Children who are popular tend to be less anxious and less jealous than those who are less popular. Boys at every age express the emotions that are regarded as sex appropriate, such as anger and curiosity, more overtly than girls, while girls are likely to experience more fears, worries and feelings of affection than boys, emotions regarded as sex-appropriate for them.

#### **2.4.2 Types of emotional disturbances displayed by the primary school child**

##### **2.4.2.1 *Childhood depression***

Childhood depression seems to be a common emotional disturbance in children (Maag and Forness 1991:4 and Kovacs and Goldston 1991:388). For this reason it will be discussed in greater detail than other types of emotional disturbances.

According to Mussen et al (1990:416), depressed children express sad feelings, cry easily, feel lonely, are pessimistic, moody and irritable and often have negative thoughts about themselves. Their depression is usually associated with family disruption, the unpredictability of family relationships or the loss of important people in their lives.

An episode of major depression in childhood lasts for about ten months on average and rarely occurs in a pure form. There are often multiple concurrent psychiatric problems with anxiety disorders and conduct disorders being among the most prevalent conditions. A minor depression,

which is usually less severe (although a protracted affective disturbance), lasts over three and a half years on average (Kovacs and Goldston 1991:388).

Storr (1988:128) points out that the loss of a parent in early childhood has often been linked with the development of emotional problems in later life. Parental death is thought to increase the risk of suffering from episodes of severe depression. According to Hare et al (1986:43), the classroom can be a place where support is offered for the bereaved child. Teachers and peers can help children respond to and recover from their loss and ensure that they do not face their grief alone. Getting depressed children involved with a bigger circle of friends in play and other activities could possibly help them overcome their state of depression.

According to Maag and Forness (1991:3), Papalia and Olds (1993:469) and Allen-Meares (1987:512) some of the symptoms of childhood depression are friendlessness, inability to have fun or to concentrate, absence of normal emotional reactions, tiredness or extremely active, sleeping too much, loss of appetite, poor performance in school, severe separation anxiety (like school phobia), refusal to attend school and suicidal ideation. It is important for teachers and parents not to suddenly assume that children who display any one of these symptoms are depressed. If more than one of these symptoms seems to persist for some time, however, there is some cause for alarm and psychological help should be sought.

There is convincing evidence according to Kovacs and Goldston (1991:388), Lerner et al (1988:357) and Maag and Forness (1991:6) that school aged children do suffer from depression disorders and that these disorders disrupt the child's functioning in a variety of areas, such as behavioral, cognitive, social and affective functioning.

With regard to the social aspect, depressed primary school age children may become more outwardly aggressive, anxious and antisocial (Maag and Forness 1991:6). The symptoms displayed by these children lead to the conclusion that they are likely to be rejected by their peers. Noles et al (1985:92) also stress that depression itself could diminish personal grooming and thereby lower physical attractiveness. Such lowered physical attractiveness could affect acceptance into a group since, as mentioned, acceptance into a group depends on physical appearance.

Depressive symptoms, such as prolonged difficulties with concentration and psychomotor retardation, could affect intellectual and academic achievement. These symptoms may interfere with the process of mastering new, unfamiliar or complex problems. In addition, psychomotor retardation may slow the rate of acquisition and consolidation of information for long-term memory and cause depressed learners to perform poorly on timed tasks. Academic failure, in turn, is likely to further undermine the youngsters' self-esteem and contribute to subsequent negative learning experiences. Depressive symptoms may also have adverse effects on social cognition and social problem-solving skills (Kovacs and Goldston 1991:388). For instance, in the presence of social withdrawal, normal interactions with peers and adults are precluded and this may appear as a failure to show proper initiative and reciprocity in interpersonal situations which, in turn, may discourage overtures and attention from other individuals, and thus increase the youngsters' social isolation.

From the foregoing it seems that depression may be considered one of the factors affecting the social isolation of the primary school child. Jewell et al (1990:92) assert that depressed boys, but not girls, spent much less time with friends, particularly of the same age, suggesting that social isolation is more strongly associated with depressed boys.

#### 2.4.2.2 *Acting out behaviour*

According to Papalia and Olds (1993:468), children's emotional difficulties often surface in behaviour. They fight, they lie, they steal, they destroy property, and they break rules, all of which are common forms of acting out behaviour - misbehaviour that is an outward expression of emotional turmoil.

As in the case of childhood depression, it is important here to be careful not to be too quick to conclude that children have emotional problems if they display any one of these misbehaviours once, such as telling a lie or destroying something in the classroom. However, if there are signs of any chronic antisocial behaviour, this could be a possible symptom of deep-seated emotional upset.

Doherty and Needle (1991:329) indicate that most of these acting out behaviours are common to disrupted families. According to him, children from disrupted families have lower emotional

well-being scores than those with continuously married parents. Crouch and Milner (1993:58) point out that teachers rate school-age neglected children as having more externalising (acting out) behaviour problems compared to non-maltreated children. It could be assumed that children with such acting out behaviours are at high risk of being rejected and isolated because their behaviour patterns are antisocial and do not conform to those of their peers.

#### 2.4.2.3 *Anxiety disorders*

According to Papalia and Olds (1993:468), there are two anxiety disorders that begin in childhood, namely separation anxiety disorder and school phobia.

Separation anxiety disorder is a condition that involves excessive anxiety about separation from people to whom the children are attracted. The children may refuse to go on errands, attend school, may cling to parents and shadow them around the house and have stomachaches, headaches, nausea and vomiting before or during separation. Children with this disorder tend to come from close-knit and caring families and develop the anxiety after a stressful event like a death in the family or a move to a new neighbourhood.

School phobia is an unrealistic fear that keeps children away from school. According to Papalia and Olds (1993:469), it may be a form of separation anxiety disorder, is marked by similar symptoms and seems to have more to do with the fear of leaving the mother than a fear of school itself.

Rubinstein (1987:184) points out that children with school phobia become more anxious as the time for school approaches and may complain of illness, abdominal pains or cramps, diarrhoea or nausea and vomiting. If parents pressure them to go to school, these children may become panicky and then physically resist. As soon as they are allowed to stay at home, anxiety fades and the physical complaints disappear.

It is important to draw a distinction between school phobic children and truants. Truant youngsters experience no anxiety about leaving home or attending school. Truants openly dislike

school and simply prefer not being there. They also avoid home when not attending school, while phobic children enjoy being at home and are afraid of leaving the house.

In her study with emotionally disturbed children, Jaklewicz (1988:301) discovered that both children with phobic attitude and with high levels of anxiety had difficulties in social adaptation. They withdrew from all social activities and their peer group. There would seem to be a possible relationship between school phobia, separation anxiety and social isolation.

According to Rubinstein (1987:185), school phobia is a very common problem and counselling is indispensable if the fear persists longer than a few weeks, or if it worsens. Desensitisation may be used as a method to get these children to return to school. For example, they may be returned to school, but not to the classroom. The youngsters may attend class for a short time, with each visit being prolonged until a full day is spent in class.

## **2.5 MORAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILD**

To gain an insight into the moral development of the primary school child, it is important to look at theories of moral development. Accordingly, Piaget, Selman and Kohlberg's theories will be discussed here.

### **2.5.1 Piaget's theory of moral development**

Piaget believed that moral reasoning develops in two major stages (Papalia and Olds 1993:401). In the first stage, the **morality of constraint**, young children think rapidly about moral concepts. They believe that rules cannot be changed, that behaviour is right or wrong and that any offence deserves severe punishment. This stage is also referred to heteronomous morality.

The second stage, the **morality of cooperation** is characterised by moral flexibility and is also called autonomous morality. At this stage children interact more with other people, and begin to think less egocentrically. They come into contact with an increasingly wide range of viewpoints, many of which contradict what they have learnt at home. During this stage, experience as well



as inner development help children develop their own moral standards. They realise that there is no unchangeable absolute right and wrong.

Kurtines and Gewirtz (1987:24) stress that Piaget viewed the second stage of moral reasoning as deriving from the equalitarian nature of peer interaction as well as from declines in cognitive egocentrism and cognitive realism. Because of the natural give-and-take in the interaction of equals, children are viewed as expressing a sense of participation in forming morality (eg, rules) and developing a sense of mutual respect for others, resulting in a sense of justice. Socially isolated children's understanding of rules and sense of justice is likely to be distorted because their formulation of such rules is determined in isolation and not in collaboration with their peers. Such differences in the understanding and interpretation of rules between social isolates and the children around them could lead to conflict and further rejection.

According to Hamachek (1990:171), primary school children fall between these two stages of moral development. Children up to the age of ten operate on the first stage of moral development, while children from ten years onwards are in the second stage of moral development. According to Mussen et al (1990:447), the progress from the first to the second stage of moral development is the joint function of the child's greater cognitive abilities and more extensive social experiences. As a result of more numerous and more enduring contact with peers, children learn to work cooperatively - and often make compromises - with others of equal status. Unilateral respect for adult authority is thereby reduced and respect for peers and their point of view increases.

In the second stage of moral development, peer interaction is critical. Playing and working with peers on an equal basis offers children more freedom from adult authority, and thus more opportunities for negotiating their own point of view, cooperating to reach mutual goals, and participating in joint decisions.

According to Rubenstein (1987:183), the neighbourhood peer group plays a crucial role in a child's moral and ethical development. Within the group, children learn how to play and get along with others, make up rules, arbitrate among themselves, take each other's shortcomings and intentions into account. Since the second stage of moral development stresses the need for

working together with peers, socially isolated children may experience restraints in their moral development because of their poor peer interaction.

### 2.5.2 Kohlberg's theory of moral development

Kohlberg extended and amplified Piaget's work on moral development. According to Hamachek (1990:171), Kohlberg extended Piaget's theory by proposing three broad levels of moral development, subdivided into six stages rather than two. Like Piaget, Kohlberg believed that stages of moral reasoning are determined by the cognitive capabilities of individuals. According to Asendorph and Nunner-Winkler (1992:1223), Kohlberg's perspective assumes a parallel between cognitive and affective processes in moral development. Thus, it should be possible to predict children's moral motivation and behaviour from their cognitive understanding of moral rules. Table 2.2 represents the main points of Kohlberg's theory.

**TABLE 2.2 KOHLBERG'S STAGES OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT**

<b>LEVEL 1 PRECONVENTIONAL LEVEL</b>	
Rules are set by others.	
<b>STAGE 1</b>	<b>PUNISHMENT AND OBEDIENCE ORIENTATION</b> Physical consequences of action determine its goodness or badness.
<b>STAGE 2</b>	<b>INSTRUMENTAL RELATIVIST ORIENTATION</b> What is right is whatever satisfies one's own needs and occasionally the needs of others. Elements of fairness and reciprocity are present, but they are mostly interpreted in a "you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours" fashion.
<b>LEVEL 2 CONVENTIONAL LEVEL</b>	
Individual adopts rules and will sometimes subordinate own needs to those of the group. Expectations of family, group or nation seem as valuable in own right, regardless of immediate and obvious consequences.	
<b>STAGE 3</b>	<b>"GOOD BOY-GOOD GIRL" ORIENTATION</b> Good behaviour is whatever pleases or helps others and is approved by them. One earns approval by being "nice".
<b>STAGE 4</b>	<b>"LAW AND ORDER" ORIENTATION</b> Right is doing one's duty, showing respect for authority and maintaining the given social order for its own sake.

**LEVEL 3 POSTCONVENTIONAL LEVEL**

People define own values in terms of the ethical principles they have chosen to follow.

**STAGE 5 SOCIAL CONTRACT ORIENTATION**

What's right is defined in terms of general individual rights and standards that have been agreed upon by the whole society. In contrast to stage 4, laws are not "frozen" - they can be changed for the good of society.

**STAGE 6 UNIVERSAL ETHICAL PRINCIPLE ORIENTATION**

What's right is defined by a decision of conscience according to self-chosen ethical principles. These principles are abstract and ethical (such as the Golden Rule), not specific moral prescriptions (such as the Ten Commandments)

**Source:** Slavin (1991:47)

According to Reilly and Lewis (1983:233), primary school children operate between the preconventional and conventional levels of Kohlberg's stages of moral development, with most of them at the preconventional level. Reilly further stresses that moral reasoning at any level can only emerge after the stage of cognitive development has appeared. In other words, until clearly consolidated in preoperational thought, children will be unable to exhibit a preconventional level of moral reasoning, and only after concrete operations are clearly established can children exhibit any conventional level of moral judgement. From this it becomes apparent that moral growth is closely tied up with cognitive development.

Du Toit and Kruger (1991:128) contend that since most primary school children are at the preconventional level of moral development, they are still far removed from a level of moral development characterised by autonomous, individual principles of conscience.

According to Shaffer (1993:559), Kohlberg believed that in order to move beyond the preconventional level of moral reasoning, children must be exposed to persons or situations that introduce cognitive disequilibrium, that is, conflicts between existing moral concepts and new ideas that will force them to re-evaluate their viewpoints. Kohlberg stressed that both cognitive development and relevant social experience underlie the growth of moral reasoning. From this it can be assumed that socially isolated children's moral growth would be restricted or retarded because of the lack of interaction with other peers.

According to Shaffer (1993:560), Kohlberg believed that discussing important ethical issues with peers often promotes the development of moral reasoning. Again, it seems that, because of the lack of communication between socially isolated children and their peers, socially isolated children will lack the opportunities to advance their moral reasoning.

In sum, Kohlberg and Piaget both felt that interaction among social equals contributes more to moral development than one-sided discussions with adult authority figures.

### 2.5.3 Selman's theory of moral development

Selman believed that moral development is linked to "role-taking", that is, assuming another person's point of view. He believed that since morality involved consideration of other people's welfare, it was reasonable to suppose that an increased ability to imagine how another person thought and felt should be related to the ability to make moral judgements. Table 2.3 illustrates Selman's five stages of moral reasoning.

**TABLE 2.3 SELMAN'S STAGES OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT**

Stage	Approx. Age	Development
0	4-6	Child thinks that his or her own point of view is the only one possible.
1	6-8	Child realizes that others may interpret a situation in a way different from his or her own.
2	8-10	Child has reciprocal awareness, realises that others have a different point of view and that others are aware that he or she has a particular point of view. Child understands the importance of letting others know that their requests have not been ignored or forgotten.
3	10-12	Child can imagine a third person's perspective, taking into account several different points of view.
4	Adolescence	Person realizes that communication and mutual role-taking do not always resolve disputes over rival values
<b>SOURCE:</b> Papalia and Olds (1993:402)		

According to this model, primary school children could be operating between stages one to three of Selman's theory of moral development. It also becomes evident that primary school children's

reasoning is no longer egocentric as in stage one and that they realise that others can have a different view from theirs.

Springthall and Burke (1985:51) contend that Selman's work shows that children's ability to understand the motives, feelings and intentions of other persons can be conceptualised as forming a sequence of levels of complexity. Also, the solutions children produce in resolving difficult interpersonal dilemmas have been shown to possess distinctively different thought-structural characteristics.

Like Piaget and Kohlberg, Selman's theory also focuses on the need for interaction with others to facilitate moral development. As mentioned before, poor interaction with peers and adults, as in the case of social isolates, could restrict or hinder advancement of their moral reasoning.

It may be also assumed that socially rejected children operate at a level of morality that is different from their peers. Their behaviour could be typical of those lacking sensitivity because they have not modified their ideas of right and wrong due to poor interaction and co-operation with their peers.

## **2.6 PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILD**

According to Gage and Berliner (1988:142), personality is the integration of our traits, abilities and motives as well as our temperament, attitudes, opinions, beliefs, emotional responses, cognitive styles, character and morals. Thus the concept *personality* encompasses all aspects of human behaviour.

In order to gain insight into the personality development of primary school children, it is necessary to examine theories of personality. It is impossible to discuss all the personality theories here. Maddi (1989) provides a structured approach to understanding personality development. He divides the various theories into three models according to a common core tendency inherent in each theory. Maddi's models are the conflict, fulfilment and consistency models. Theories in the conflict model include Freud, Murray, Kohut, Erikson, Berns, Rank, Argyal, Bakan, Young and Perl's gestalt theory. The fulfilment model includes theories by Rogers, Maslow, Murray, Adler,

Allport, Fromm and White. In the consistency model we find theories by Kelly, McClelland, Fiske and Maddi.

For the purposes of the present study, only one theory in each model will be discussed. Before this is done, the principle or core tendency that operates in each model needs to be explained. According to Maddi (1989:20), the conflict model assumes that the person is continuously and inevitably in the grip of a clash between two great opposing, unchangeable forces. This model further has two divisions: **psychosocial**, where the source of one great force is in the person as an individual, and the source of the other great force is in groups or societies, **intrapsychic** where both great forces arise from within the person. In contrast, the fulfilment model assumes only one great force and localises it in the person. As in the conflict model, there are also two divisions here: **actualisation**, where the great force is in the form of a genetic blueprint determining the person's special capabilities, **perfection** where the great force constitutes strong ideals of perfection. The consistency model, emphasises the formative influence of feedback from the extensive world. If the feedback is consistent with what was expected, there is quiescence, but if there is inconsistency then there is a pressure to decrease this uncomfortable state of affairs. Also, in this model there are two divisions: **cognitive dissonance**, where the relevant aspects of the person in which there may or may not be consistency are cognitive in nature, and **activation**, which emphasises consistency or inconsistency between the degree of bodily tension or activation that is customary for the person and that which actually exists at the time.

For the purpose of this study, Erikson, Rogers and Kelly's theories will be discussed, as they are more comprehensive than the others and take environmental influences into account in explaining personality development. Since the environment plays a vital role in influencing social isolation, theories that highlight the social aspect of personality development are relevant to this study.

### 2.6.1 Erikson's theory of personality development

Erikson's theory falls in the psychosocial conflict model categorised by Maddi (1989) where individual development is the result of two simultaneous and complex influences, namely genetic and social influences. Erikson believed that personality develops through a series of crises through

which trust, autonomy, initiative, industry and identity are formed. He also explored how, in wrong circumstances, mistrust, shame, guilt, a sense of inferiority and confused identity could result.

According to Gage and Berliner (1988:143), the crises described by Erikson leads either to personality growth or regression. They influence whether our personality becomes more or less integrated. Erikson defines a crisis as a time of increased vulnerability to a particular psychosocial challenge. Each crisis is related to the others and exists in some form before the decisive moment for its resolution arrives. As each crisis is positively resolved, it contributes to the ultimate strength and vigour of the growing personality.

Meyer et al (1989:149) highlight the social aspect of Erikson's theory in stating that Erikson believed that human development consisted of the progressive and lifelong evolution of the individual's innate potential. Although the broad trend of this development is automatic, its particular detail is determined by the specific challenges and possibilities which the social environment makes available to the individual, while successful (positive) development depends on the nature and quality of the individual's interpersonal relationships.

Hall and Lindzey (1985:118) stress that Erikson's major contribution is to emphasise the importance of the individual's interaction with the social environment in shaping personality. Qualities such as "basic trust" and initiative exist in rudimentary form in early childhood stages, but develop and mature only through experience with the social environment.

Table 2.4 depicts Erikson's eight stages of personal and social development.

**TABLE 2.4 ERIKSON'S STAGES OF PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

STAGE	APPROX. AGE	PSYCHOSOCIAL CRISES	SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS
1	Birth to 18 months	Trust vs Mistrust	Maternal person
2	18 months to 3 years	Autonomy vs Doubt	Parental persons
3	3 to 6 years	Initiative vs guilt	Basic family
4	6 to 12 years	Industry vs Inferiority	Neighbourhood / school
5	12 to 18 years	Identity vs Role confusion	Peer groups and models of leadership
6	Young Adulthood	Intimacy vs Isolation	Partners in friendship
7	Middle Adulthood	Generativity vs Absorption	Divided labour and shared household
8	Late Adulthood	Integrity vs Despair	"Mankind" "My kind"
<b>Source:</b> Slavin (1991:40)			

From table 2.4 it can be seen that primary school children operate at stage 4, **industry versus inferiority**. According to Slavin, children at this stage want to make things. Success brings with it a sense of industry, a good feeling about oneself and one's abilities. Failure on the other hand, creates a negative self-image, a sense of inadequacy that may hinder future learning. Failure need not be real, it can be an inability to "measure up to" one's own standards or those of parents, teachers or brothers and sisters.

Hjelle and Ziegler (1992:197) point out that Erikson believed that industry also included a feeling of being interpersonally competent - the confidence that one can exert a positive influence on the social world in quest of meaningful individual and social goals. Socially isolated children presumably, then, develop a sense of inferiority because of their lack of interpersonal competency and inability to influence their social environment. Hjelle stresses further that this period of life is associated with the child's increased power of deductive reasoning and self-discipline as well as the ability to relate to peers according to prescribed rules. Applying this to socially isolated children, it would seem that such children are possibly rejected because of their inability to relate to peers according to prescribed rules.



### 2.6.2 Rogers' theory of personality development

According to Maddi (1989:99), the central aspect in Rogers' theory of personality is self-actualization. This refers to the pressure in people that leads them in the direction of becoming whatever it is in their inherited nature to be. There are two additional offshoots of actualisation tendency in humans: the need for *positive regard* and the need for *positive self-regard*. The need for positive regard refers to the person's satisfaction at receiving the approval of others and frustration at receiving disapproval. The need for positive self-regard is a more internalised version of this and refers to personal satisfaction at approving and dissatisfaction at disapproving of oneself.

Because people have a need for positive regard, they are sensitive to or can be affected by the attitudes of the significant people in their lives towards them. In the process of gaining approval and disapproval from others, people develop a conscious sense of who they are, called *self-concept*. Along with this, they develop a need for positive self-regard which ensures that self-actualisation will take the form of favouring behaviour and development consistent with the self-concept.

According to Maddi (1989:106), the self-concept is socially determined. Therefore, the type of self-concept primary school children develop will presumably be determined mainly by the peers and significant people around them, such as parents and teachers.

Liebert and Spiegler (1990:294) point out that the experience of *threat* is an important concept in Rogers theory when examining how the process of defence operates. According to Rogers, threat is experienced when one perceives - consciously or unconsciously- that there is incongruity between one's experience and one's self-concept. Threat is experienced emotionally as vague uneasiness and tension, commonly called anxiety. Anxiety is a signal that the unified self-concept is in danger of being disorganised. This anxiety, in turn, leads to defence processes that reduce the incongruity and consequently reduce anxious feelings. According to Rogers, two defence processes, namely distortion and denial, can be employed to reduce the anxiety. Through distortion, people distort their perception of a threatening experience to make it compatible with their self-concept. Socially isolated children, then, may presumably distort the experience of being

rejected by telling themselves that their peers don't invite them to join them because they think they must be busy with their own work.

Denial, on the other hand, prevents people from becoming aware of experiences that are incongruent with their self-concept. In some way, the self is "convinced " that the experience does not exist. With regard to socially isolated children, they could deny the threatening experience by believing that their peers invited them to join them, but they chose not to join them.

As noted previously, the self-concept (which is socially determined) is a very important concept in Rogers' theory. Now it is necessary to examine the relationship between social isolation and the type of self-concept a person has.

#### *2.6.2.1 Self-concept and social isolation*

Gage and Berliner (1988:162) define the term "self-concept" as the totality of the perceptions that we have about ourselves, our attitude toward ourselves, and the language we use to describe ourselves. It is important to draw a distinction between the terms "self", "self-concept" and "self-esteem" since they are sometimes used interchangeably.

According to Hamachek (1990:306), the self refers to our sense of personal existence; it is that part of ourselves of which we are consciously aware . According to Calhoun and Acocella (1990:164), Rogers further draws a distinction between the real self and the ideal self. The real self is what we know to be true about ourselves while the ideal self is what we feel we should be. If there is a difference between the real self and ideal self, we will feel unhappy with ourselves.

The self-concept is our idea of personal identity; it refers to that cluster of perceptions and attitudes we have about ourselves at any given moment. Self-perception basically has two dimensions: a cognitive dimension and an affective dimension. The self-concept is the cognitive part of self-perception while self-esteem is the affective dimension. Self-concept is the descriptive aspect of self-perception. For example, we might say "I have many friends", while self-esteem is

the evaluative component of our self-perception and is reflected in a statement such as "I am friendly".

From this it follows then, that different people will have distinct ideas (self-conceptions) about their awareness and distinct levels of self-esteem, and for this reason individual personalities differ so greatly.

Therefore when examining the relationship between primary school children's self-concept and social isolation, it is imperative to look at the possible relationship between their self-esteem and social isolation.

According to Calhoun and Acocella (1990:60), our expectations for ourselves, to a large extent, determine how we will do in life. If we think of ourselves as successes, then we are likely to succeed. If we think we are failures, then we will actively arrange for ourselves to fail. In other words, the self-concept can be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Jacobsen et al (1994:113) found a close relationship between children's attachment pattern and the type of self-concept they develop. According to him, children who evidence insecure, disorganised attachment in infancy have a more negative self-concept than children with other attachment patterns.

According to Kwan (1992:39), loneliness has been found to correlate with a negative self-concept. Taking Kwan's findings into account, social isolation may have an effect on the development of the social component of a people's self-concept and hence retard their personality development as a whole. Inderbitzen-Pisaruk et al (1992:151) also found a relation between loneliness and a negative self-concept. According to her, loneliness can be predicted from self-perceptions of poor social skills.

Woodward and Frank (1988:563) and Brage et al (1993:690) found that poor self-esteem influences social isolation. They show that there is a significant negative correlation between loneliness and self-esteem scores, which implies that the lower the self-esteem, the more lonely the individual.

Children with low self-esteem can be characterised as children who are fairly convinced of their inferiority, exhibiting discouragement, timidity and at times depression. In addition, these children tend to be ineffective in social interactions with peers because they lack the socialization abilities to make new friends and seem unable to engage in or contribute to group discussions (Byrnes 1984:276).

Inderbitzen-Pisaruk et al (1992:151) and Knapczyk (1992:262) found that effective peer relationships can facilitate normal social development, improve self-efficacy, enhance self-esteem and create more opportunities for incidental learning while poor peer relations will have the opposite effect. Byrnes (1984:276) also found that middle childhood is a time when peer relationships and success in school play a particularly important role in the development of self-esteem. According to her, since peer acceptance becomes progressively more important as children pass through middle childhood, one would expect socially withdrawn children to show decreasing levels of self-esteem, their lack of success in social relationships becoming more blatant as other children turn increasingly toward their peers.

Papalia and Olds (1993:448) also stress the importance of others in the formation of a child's self-esteem. According to her, it is among other children that youngsters develop a self-concept and build self-esteem. They form opinions of themselves by seeing themselves as others see them. They have a basis of comparison - a realistic gauge of their own abilities and skills. Since socially isolated children lack such opportunities to compare themselves with others, the self-esteem they have of themselves can be restricted.

### **2.6.3 Kelly's theory of personality development**

Maddi (1989:155) classifies Kelly's theory of personality as a consistency model. This model emphasises the importance of the information the person gets from interacting with the external world. According to the model, personality is determined much more by the feedback from the interaction with the world than it is by the person's inherent attributes. Feedback that is consistent with what was expected or has been customary produces no change. But inconsistency between the feedback and the expectation creates discomfort and the pressure to alleviate it. Life is understood as the extended attempt to maintain consistency.

According to Maddi (1989:156), the core aspect of personality from Kelly's point of view is the person's continual attempt to predict and control the events of experience. In this attempt, the person engages in the construing of events which classes events together with others that are considered similar and contrasts them with others that are considered different. This construing of events results in constructs.

According to Pervin (1980:184), all constructs are composed of opposite pairs. At least three elements are necessary to form a construct: two of the elements of the construct must be perceived as similar to each other and the third element must be perceived as different from these two. The way in which two elements are construed to be similar, forms the similarity pole of the construct, while the third element forms the contrast pole. For example, observing two people helping someone and the third hurting someone could lead to the construct kind-cruel, with kind forming the similarity pole and cruel the contrast pole.

Similarly, a child could form a social-unsocial construct by observing people's actions that display social characteristics (such as being friendly, greeting and assisting others) and unsocial characteristics (such as being aggressive, hurting others and destroying things).

Also according to Kelly's theory, constructs are arranged in hierarchical order. The relation of the constructs to one another, namely their organisation, makes up the structure of personality. In examining the hierarchical order of constructs, we find that constructs can be **superordinate** or **subordinate**. A superordinate construct incorporates other constructs as its elements. The latter are then referred to as subordinate constructs because when something is evaluated in accordance with a superordinate construct there are specific implications in terms of the subordinate constructs. For example, "social" versus "unsocial" is a superordinate construct while "friendly-unfriendly" and "aggressive-nonaggressive" could be subordinate constructs.

According to Hjelle and Ziegler (1992:412), another important aspect of Kelly's theory of personal construct is the relationship between people and their construct system. This is formally defined in the **sociality corollary**, which specifies the conditions necessary for an effective interpersonal relationship: "To the extent that one person construes the construction process of another, he may play a role in a social process involving the other person." This corollary stipulates that social

interaction consists primarily of one person trying to understand how another person perceives and interprets his or her environment. For Kelly, harmonious social interaction requires that one person psychologically place himself or herself in the shoes of another person so that he or she is better able to understand and predict the other's present and subsequent behaviour.

Suppose primary school children want to play the role of "friend" in relation to their peers, they must predict how their friends construe "friend" and then act accordingly. For example, if children think that their peers consider helping others as being part of the "friend" role, they will presumably engage in helping behaviours.

Social isolates may be assumed to have failed to construe the construction processes of their peers, therefore they may display inappropriate behaviours which are not in accordance with the construct system of their peers. This display of inappropriate behaviours can be seen as the main reason for their isolation and rejection.

According to Hjelle and Ziegler (1992:414), Kelly believed that it is intrinsically satisfying to have one's social predictions about other people confirmed. When people act in accordance with certain ideas that they have about others and discover that they have correctly predicted the expectations of others, they are strongly encouraged toward further socialised behaviour.

The importance of Kelly's theory for socially isolated children is to help them try to construe other children's construct system so that they can display behaviours that are expected of them. By doing this, there is a possibility of increasing the interaction with others and thereby reducing rejection.

## **2.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter adopted a holistic approach to the understanding of the development of the primary school child in which all aspects of development (physical, cognitive, affective, moral and personality) except social development were examined. The aspect of social development in relation to the socially isolated child will be discussed in chapter 3.

With regard to physical development, it has been found that physical unattractiveness due to abnormal growth, such as being obese or having stunted growth, could lead to rejection by peers.

Piaget, Bruner, the information-processing and Vygotsky's theories were used to examine the cognitive development of the primary school child. Piaget's theory stresses that children who lack the necessary social skills which enable them to accommodate and assimilate elements in a new social environment may experience what he calls, a social disequilibrium resulting in social isolation.

According to Bruner's theory, progression from one stage to the next requires systematic interaction between the child and the environment. In socially isolated and withdrawn children, cognitive development is presumably hindered since not much interaction takes place between them and the environment.

The information-processing approach sees the mind as a computer. The mind takes new information, processes and stores it and then makes it available for some future occasion. According to this model, rejected and socially isolated children demonstrate characteristic deficits or qualitative differences in performance at various stages, such as the inability to process external stimuli using the sensory register.

Vygotsky emphasises the close relationship that exists between the cognitive and social development of the child. He noted that children begin learning from people around them, namely, their social world, which is the source of all their concepts, ideas, facts, skills and attitudes. Therefore, it would seem that children who do not have healthy relationships with the people around them would have their cognitive development hampered.

An analysis of the affective development of the primary school child reveals that emotional disturbances, such as childhood depression, acting out behaviour and anxiety disorders (such as separation anxiety disorder and school phobia), influence children's rejection and isolation. Childhood depression appears to be the most common emotional disturbance which is mainly influenced by factors within the family, such as family disruption.

With regard to the moral development of the primary school child, Piaget , Kohlberg and Selman's theories were used as models to study this aspect of development. All three theorists proposed certain stages of moral development through which children progress. They also emphasise the need for interaction with others to facilitate moral development. Poor interaction with peers and adults, as in the case of social isolates, restricts advancement of their moral reasoning.

With reference to the personality development of the primary school child, Erikson, Rogers and Kelly's theories were discussed. According to Erikson's psychosocial theory, personality develops through a series of crises through which trust, autonomy, initiative, industry and identity are formed. Also, under wrong circumstances, mistrust, shame, guilt, a sense of inferiority and confused identity could result. As each crisis is positively resolved, it contributes to the ultimate strength and vigour of the growing personality. Erikson's theory also emphasises the importance of the individual's interaction with the social environment in shaping personality. Of importance to the primary school child is the fourth stage of Erikson's theory, namely, industry versus inferiority. Here it can be assumed that socially isolated children have developed a sense of inferiority because of the lack of interpersonal competence and inability to influence their social environment.

The development of the type of self-concept a person acquires is central to Rogers' theory of personality development. The self-concept refers to that cluster of perceptions and attitudes people have about themselves at any given moment. Loneliness has been found to correlate with a negative self-concept, therefore, social isolation is assumed to have an effect on the development of the social component of people's self-concept and hence retard their personality development as a whole.

According to Kelly's theory of personality, personality is determined much more by the feedback from the interaction with the world than by people's inherent attributes. An important concept in Kelly's theory is the construing of events into constructs, which are arranged in hierarchical order. It is this organisation that makes up the structure of personality. Another important concept in Kelly's theory is that of the "sociality corollary", which stipulates that social interaction consists primarily of one person trying to understand how another person perceives and interprets his or her environment and reality. With regard to social isolates, they have presumably failed to



construe the construction processes of their peers. Therefore they may display inappropriate behaviours, which are not in accordance with the construct system of their peers, and this display of inappropriate behaviours may be seen as the main reason for their rejection and isolation.

## **The social development of the primary school child**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter deals with the social development of the primary school child. Social development refers to any form of behaviour that involves relations with others. Social development leads to social competence, which involves social outcomes children achieve, such as being friends, being popular or being liked by other children and engaging in effective interaction with peers (Hubbard and Coie 1994:2). To understand the social development of the primary school child, we shall discuss an analysis of the phenomenon of socialisation, the social characteristics of the primary school child, theories of social development, agents of socialisation and the friendship formation of the primary school child. Then we shall try to identify the possible factors that could hinder the social development of primary school children, which places them at risk of becoming social isolates.

### **3.2 ANALYSIS OF THE PHENOMENON OF SOCIALISATION**

Berns (1985:30) defines socialization as the process by which individuals acquire the knowledge, skills or character traits that enable them to participate as effective members of groups and society. In this definition, Berns highlights three aims of socialisation :

- Socialization enables children to learn what they need to know in order to be integrated into the society in which they live.
- Socialisation also enables children to develop their potentialities and form satisfying relationships.

- Socialisation aims to develop a self-concept, instill self-discipline, instil ambitions, teach social roles and teach developmental skills.

Hurlock (1978:228) also proposes three aims of the socialisation process which, although separate and distinct, are so closely interrelated that failure to achieve any one of them will lower the individual's level of socialisation. According to Hurlock, socialisation enables children to:

- **Learn to behave in socially approved ways.** Every social group has its standard of what is approved behaviour for its members. To become socialised, children must not only know what this approved behaviour is, but also model their own behaviour along the approved lines.
- **Play approved social roles.** Every social group has its own patterns of customary behaviour that are carefully defined and are expected of members of the group. There are approved roles, for example, for parents, children, teachers and for learners.
- **Develop social attitudes.** To become socialised, children must like people and social activities. If they do, they will make good social adjustments and be accepted as members of the social groups with which they are identified.

From Berns and Hurlock's aims of socialisation, it can be concluded that social development is the process by which individuals learn the ways of a given society so that they can function within it. With regard to socially isolated children, it can be assumed that their socialisation process has been hampered in some way since their behaviour is not socially acceptable (ie, does not agree with the approved behaviours).

An analysis of theories on social development should provide possible reasons for the restriction in the social development of the socially isolated child. First let us consider the social characteristics of the primary school child to use as a profile to judge the characteristics which the isolated primary school child lacks.

### 3.3 SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILD

According to Hurlock (1980:166), the primary school child stage is often referred to as the "gang age" because it is characterised by interest in peer activities, an increasingly strong desire to be an accepted member of a gang, and discontent when children are not with their friends.

Biehler and Snowman (1993:114) describe it as a phase where the peer group becomes powerful and begins to replace adults as the major source of behaviour standards and recognition of achievement. Children at this stage may be more eager to impress their friends than to please their teacher. With regard to socially isolated children, their behaviour is presumably of such a nature that it does not impress their peers and therefore they are either rejected or neglected.

Albrecht (1994:57) summarises the main social characteristics of the primary school children as follows:

- They begin to develop group (peer, gang) relationships - looking for belongingness.
- They learn discrete social skills like entering and leaving groups, exercising social planning skills like when to ask a friend to play and when to wait, anticipate how a friend might respond to an idea or suggested activity, considering the potential consequences of their actions for self and others and evaluating potential outcomes of actions and activities.
- They prefer to be friends of the same sex and same age.
- They affiliate with the same group most of the time.
- They conform to identified group norms and behaviours.
- They like to make and keep their Own rules of conduct within the group.
- They reject the participation of the opposite sex in the group.
- They resolve some conflicts without adult intervention.

Socially isolated primary school children presumably lack these socially developmental milestones, which places them at risk of being rejected by their peers. They may, for example, lack important social skills needed for entering and leaving groups and are unable to anticipate how potential friends may react to their actions or viewpoints. Such deficiencies in socially isolated children may create conflict situations with the people around them and this may further result in rejection and isolation.

Primary school children are most susceptible to conformation to peer activities (Papalia and Olds 1993:448). Through conformity to peer activities, children develop psychologically in three major ways. Firstly, they develop skills for sociability and intimacy, enhance relationships, and acquire a sense of belonging. Secondly, they are motivated to achieve and attain "integrity of the self" or a sense of identity. Thirdly, they learn. Socially isolated primary school children lack a sense of belonging, have a poor sense of identity and lack the opportunity to learn from the children around them.

Mussen et al (1990:430) note that, compared to those of pre-school children, changes in primary school children's social interactions and play are to some extent a function of increasing skill in role-taking, that is, the activity of putting oneself mentally in someone else's position. It is hypothesised that underlying role-taking activity is empathy, the recognition, understanding and vicarious feeling of another person's emotions. According to Mussen, empathy and role-taking are central processes in social cognition, interaction and communication.

These processes have a profound effect on primary school children's perceptions of others and on their friendships, social status, judgement and moral behaviour. From this it can be deduced that socially isolated children lack skills in role-taking and because of this are unable to empathise. Because of this deficiency, these children are unable to interact and communicate successfully with the people around them and also their moral behaviour is not in compliance with those of their peers. Consequently they are most likely to be rejected and isolated.

### 3.4 THEORIES OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Most books on the socialisation of the child approach social development from the social learning and humanistic perspectives. According to the social learning perspective, most behaviour is **learnt** while the humanistic perspective places great emphasis on the **self** in the child's socialisation process.

Erikson's psychosocial theory, Selman's theory of interpersonal reasoning and Sullivan's social cognitive theory also deal with children's social development (from early childhood to adolescence). Therefore, in order to get a general and a specific account of the social development of the primary school child, the learning and humanistic perspectives as well as Erikson, Selman and Sullivan's theories will be discussed.

#### 3.4.1 Social learning theory

Social learning theories hypothesise on how environmental conditions affect social behaviour and cognition (Mussen et al 1990:385). According to Mussen two major processes are proposed: operant conditioning and observational learning

##### 3.4.1.1 *Operant conditioning*

According to Berns (1985:50), operant refers to producing effect. When people's behaviour is followed by a favourable outcome (**reinforcement**), the probability of that behaviour occurring again is increased. When people's behaviour has no favourable outcome (for example, it doesn't get attention, it is ignored) or has an unfavourable outcome (**punishment**), the probability of that behaviour occurring again is decreased.

Operant methods stress the participatory role of individuals in their own socialisation. Two of the main principles in learning are reinforcement and punishment.

a) *Reinforcement*

Reinforcement is basically an object or event presented following a behaviour that serves to increase the likelihood that the behaviour will occur again. An example of reinforcement could be praise or reward for desired behaviour.

Many behaviour patterns, such as sharing, helping, aggression, sex-typed behaviour, and other personal and social behaviours are influenced by the rewards they produce (Mussen et al 1990:385; Thompson 1993:376).

Applying the principle of reinforcement to socially isolated children, it is possible to assume that they ended up in such a situation, because their social skills were not adequately reinforced at an early age. Conversely, it is also possible to change the plight of social isolates by constantly rewarding them every time they display even the slightest interactive behaviour with others.

The principal of reinforcement can be applied in the case of social isolates who are rejected because of their unsocial behaviour patterns, such as aggression. Every time these children display socially accepted behaviour within a group (such as helping, playing without fighting), they must be rewarded so that this type of acceptable behaviour pattern will be sustained and they will be liked and accepted by their peers.

The only problem with reinforcement is that children may become bored with the reinforcer and thus its effectiveness diminishes. People working with social isolates should therefore constantly identify new modes of reinforcing them for prosocial behaviours in order to maintain the effectiveness of reinforcers.

b) *Punishment*

Punishment consists of physically or psychologically painful stimuli or the temporary withdrawal of pleasant stimuli when undesirable behaviour occurs (Berns 1985:52). Punishment is most valuable when children's behaviour has to be stopped quickly for safety

reasons. In the case of rejected learners, who display aggressive behaviours, punishment could be applied in some instances.

One of the major criticisms of punishment as a behaviour modifying technique is that the emotional side effect of punishment (fear, embarrassment, low self-esteem, tenseness) may be psychologically more damaging than the original behaviour (Berns, 1985:52). Thus it is important to explore the use of other types of behaviour modification techniques first, and only as a last resort punishment should be used.

#### 3.4.1.2 *Observational learning*

By simply observing others, children can acquire a wide range of social and emotional qualities without going through a cumbersome trial-and-error process (Mussen et al 1990:385). Both Berns (1985:55) and Thompson (1993:376) concur that such observation enables one to learn appropriate social behaviour, attitudes and emotions vicariously. The models can be parents, siblings, relatives, friends, teachers, coaches and television characters.

According to Gage and Berliner (1988:260), exposure to a model can affect children's behaviour in at least three ways, namely :

- Children learn new behaviour.
- The exposure facilitates already learned behaviour, which occurs when a model's behaviour resembles behaviours that learners have previously mastered and, in this case, the model's performance may simply elicit a previously learned response.
- It inhibits or disinhibits already learned behaviour. To inhibit is to restrain or make a response less frequent while to disinhibit, is to free from restraint and thus allow a response to occur.

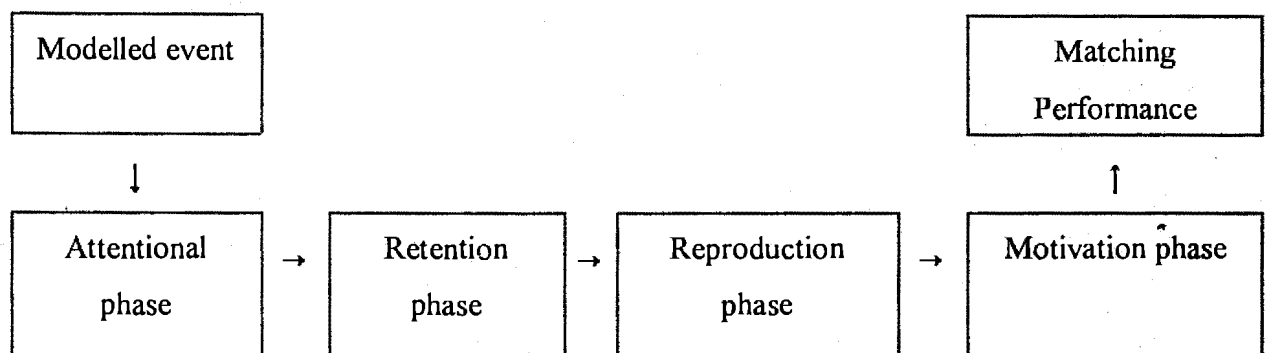


With regard to socially isolated children, exposure to a model can have the following effect:

- withdrawn and rejected children may learn prosocial behaviour from a model who displays such prosocial behaviour. Such children may become less restrained and change from a state of social withdrawal and become more socially active after observing a model who displays socially interactive behaviour patterns.
- aggressive - rejected children may inhibit socially undesirable behaviour patterns after being exposed to a display of prosocial behaviour by a model.

Mussen et al (1990:385) discuss Bandura's theory describing the variables that affect observational learning and imitation. Figure 3.1 depicts this analysis of observational learning.

**FIGURE 3.1 ANALYSIS OF OBSERVATIONAL LEARNING**



During the attentional phase, observers pay attention to the action or activities of the modelled event. During the second phase, the observer codes model activities into either words, concise labels or vivid imagery. Children who simply observe or are preoccupied with other matters while observing may not retain behaviour better than others who focus their full attention on the modelled event. During the reproduction phase, the verbal or visual codes in memory guide the actual performance of the newly acquired behaviour.

Gage and Berliner (1988:265) note that observational learning is most accurate when overt enactment follows mental rehearsal. Also, at this stage, corrective feedback is important because it helps shape behaviour during the initial enactment of newly acquired behaviour.

During the motivational phase, reinforcement and punishment are seen as affecting the learner's motivation to perform.

According to observational learning theory, behaviour acquired by observing others is enacted only if it is reinforcing to do so. If it is punishing to perform the behaviour, it will not usually be forthcoming.

By Bandura's theory, socially isolated primary school children, may have experienced setbacks at any one of the stages of the model. Such setbacks may have prevented them from reaching the final stages of the model. This is shown by their failure to enact prosocial behaviours modelled by others. Some of the possible setbacks encountered by socially isolated children may be their failure to pay attention to, rehearse and reproduce modelled behaviours. Failure to reproduce modelled behaviours may also have been caused by lack of reinforcement when such behaviours were initially enacted.

According to observational learning theory, children learn to do what they see others doing. Therefore it is important to provide children with models that display wanted and socially desirable behaviours and eliminate those that display socially undesirable behaviours.

With regard to the social isolates, these children are either not adequately exposed to models who exemplify high social interactive behaviours or possibly identify with models who show poor social interactive skills. Hendrick (1988:171) notes that social isolates can learn to behave like other people and to get along with them as a result of identifying with and imitating such people and also by being reinforced for desirable social behaviours. One way of doing this is to encourage role playing to increase the awareness of how it feels to be someone else. This could be achieved through dramatic and imaginative play involving taking the roles of others.

According to Bornstein and Lamb (1992:524), it has been found that prosocial behaviours can be learned directly from peers as well as indirectly by observing social behaviours and their consequences when enacted by peer models. In turn, the social behaviours learned and taught by peers have some bearing on the establishment, maintenance and disruption of peer relationships.

This has some relevance for social isolates in that there is hope that their predicament can change and they can learn new social skills if exposed to models that exemplify prosocial behaviours.

### **3.4.2 The humanistic approach to social development**

The humanistic approach to social development places strong emphasis on the development of the self in the child's socialisation process. Socialisation is centred on the development of the self-concept (Horton and Hunt 1984:101).

The different concepts used in humanistic theories, namely, the self, self-concept, ideal self and self-esteem were discussed in chapter 2 (see 2.6.2.1). The relationship between the self concept to social isolation has also been discussed in great detail, however, what remains to be discussed in greater detail, is how the self-esteem plays an important role in the socialization process of the primary school child.

Berns (1985:415) views one's self-esteem as being derived from the reflected appraisal of others. Simplistically, if you have been treated with concern and approval, you will have a high self-esteem; if you have been rejected and criticised, you will have a low self-esteem.

According to Sears et al (1991:292), lonely people always have a low self-esteem and may be less willing to take risks in social settings. This could make it harder for them to form relationships and thereby increasing their chances of loneliness.

Both Hendrick (1988:126) and Page (1992:150) report that feelings of self-esteem result from children's reaction to what they judge themselves to be and to their anticipation of being accepted or rejected. For example, children who are well coordinated, who are sought after by their playmates and who get along well with their teachers will probably see themselves as adequate and will possess good feelings of self-esteem, whereas overweight children with weak eyesight and few friends may come to think of themselves as unattractive and unlovable and as a result will hold themselves in low self-esteem.

Hurlock (1980:186) lists certain variables which affect primary school children's self-esteem and possibly predispose them to becoming social isolates. The variables are as follows:

- **Physical condition**  
Poor health or physical defects that cut children off from play with their peers make them feel inferior and martyred.
- **Body build**  
Children who are overweight or very small for their age may be unable to keep pace with their peers and, as a result, develop feelings of inferiority.
- **Names and nicknames**  
Names which cause children to be ridiculed can lead to feelings of inferiority. Nicknames that make fun of a physical or personality trait lead to feelings of inferiority and resentment.
- **Socioeconomic status**  
If children sense that their socioeconomic status is inferior to that of their agemates, it is likely to lead to feelings of inferiority.
- **Social acceptance**  
Acceptance or lack of it on the part of peers influences children's self-esteem. Rejected and neglected children feel inferior when not accepted in a group.
- **Success and failure**  
Success in the tasks children set out to achieve leads to a feeling of confidence and self-acceptance, while failure makes for a feeling of inadequacy. Repeated failures have a damaging effect on children's self-esteem.

- **Intelligence**

Children's self-esteem is adversely affected if their intelligence deviates markedly from the norm. Children who are duller than average sense their inferiority and the rejectant attitude of their group.

Thornton and Lychman (1991:85) indicate that peer attitude about "ideal" size, physique and physical capabilities can influence children's self-esteem. Children who are popular with their peers are generally physically attractive, intelligent and assertive.

Physical appearance seems to play an important role in popularity and acceptance among peers. Therefore it is necessary to encourage primary school children to treat other individuals as unique human beings and not to ostracise them on the basis of their looks and inherent characteristics, over which they have no control.

### **3.4.3 Erikson's psychosocial theory**

Since chapter 2 gives a detailed account of Erikson's stages of psychosocial development, only the industry versus inferiority stage, the stage at which primary school children operate, will be discussed here.

According to Papalia and Olds (1993:443), the major crisis of middle childhood is that of industry versus inferiority. The issue to be resolved at this stage is children's capacity for productive work where mastery of certain tasks can help them form a positive self-concept. The virtue that develops with the successful resolution of these tasks is competence, a view of the self as being able to master skills and complete tasks. As children compare their own abilities with those of their peers, they construct a sense of who they are. If they feel inadequate by comparison, they may retreat to the familiar but less challenging nest of the family, where less may be expected of them. Continued feeling inadequate and retreating to the family nest sets the stage for such children becoming social isolates.

Smart and Smart (1982:374) is also of the opinion that a sense of inferiority and inadequacy results when development does not go well during this stage (industry vs inferiority) of development for

primary school children. Failure in accomplishing tasks is disastrous to children's concept of themselves as adequate persons. As mentioned in chapter 2, a negative self-concept causes children to withdraw from the activities around them, which predisposes them to becoming social isolates.

From the preceding, it is evident that situations which allow children at middle childhood stage to experience success and mastery in certain tasks will enable them to develop a positive self-concept and enter any situation and participate in any activity with others with some degree of confidence.

Primary school children at this stage (industry versus inferiority) of development seek and develop competence in other social situations (Manning 1988:96). Peers and friends act as socialising agents and become increasingly important. This stage is considered the most decisive stage in social development since developing child experience mastery or failure in social activities and social interaction. Failure in social activities leads to a sense of inferiority and withdrawal from social interaction.

Table 3.1 summarises the characteristics of children at the industry vs inferiority stage and their implications for teachers. The basic principle underlying these characteristics is the need to achieve success and recognition in the presence of peers. The implications for educators presented in the table 3.1 will be discussed in detail in chapter 8.

**TABLE 3.1 ERIKSON'S INDUSTRY vs INFERIORITY STAGE**  
**(6/7 YEARS - 11/12 YEARS)**

CHARACTERISTICS	IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATORS
1. Uses skills and abilities to gain recognition for producing.	1. Recognise improved skills, abilities and accomplishments.
2. Demonstrates eagerness and diligence to achieve a sense of industry.	2. Appreciate and encourage the child's attempts to achieve a sense of accomplishment.
3. Learns significantly from older children.	3. Recognise influences of peers and attempt to arrange "positive" peer pressure.
4. May have feelings of despair and inadequacy if does'nt identify with peers.	4. Encourage learner's need to identify positively with peers and to achieve feelings of adequacy.
5. Segregation pursuits by sex yet begins cross-sex social interactions.	5. Recognise the early adolescent's preference for same sex friends and the need to provide successful cross-sex interaction.
<b>Source: Manning (1988:97)</b>	

In summary we find that the most important aspects of Erikson's theory of social development of primary school children are the type of self-concept children develop and their experience of mastery and failure in social settings. Negative self-concepts formed through failure in tasks and social activities leads to withdrawal from social interaction.

#### **3.4.4 Selman's theory of interpersonal reasoning**

Selman defines interpersonal reasoning as the ability to understand the relationship between motives and behaviour among a group of people. According to Selman, this ability changes as children achieve cognitive ability (Biehler and Snowman 1993:115).

Keller and Wood (1989:820) share a similar view and stresses that the level of cognitive development exerts a stable influence over time on friendship reasoning. The ability to differentiate and coordinate social perspectives hypothetically represents the person's cognitive ability and levels

of reasoning about various issues of friendship. From this, one can conclude that Selman's theory of social development places much emphasis on the link between cognitive and social aspects of development.

Papalia and Olds (1993:450) contend that according to Selman's theory, children in middle childhood (between 8 and 12 years) see a friend as someone they feel comfortable with. Friendship makes children more sensitive and loving, more able to give and receive respect. Edelstein et al (1990:166) indicate that Selman's concept of interpersonal understanding develops in a cumulative, sequential and stage-like fashion. Table 3.2 depicts Selman's theory of interpersonal reasoning which closely resembles the stages of his theory on moral development in chapter 2.

**TABLE 3.2 SELMAN'S STAGES OF INTERPERSONAL REASONING**

<p><b>STAGE 0 : Egocentric level (about ages 4 to 6)</b>  Children do not recognize that other persons may interpret the same social event or course of action differently from the way they do. They do not reflect on the thought of self or others. They can label the overtly expressed feelings of others but do not comprehend cause-and-effect relations of social interactions.</p>
<p><b>STAGE 1 : Social information role taking (about ages 6-8)</b>  Children are able to differentiate between their own interpretation of social interaction and the interpretations of others in limited ways. But they cannot simultaneously think of their own view and those of others.</p>
<p><b>STAGE 2 : Self-reflective role taking (about ages 8-10)</b>  Interpersonal relations are interpreted in relation to specific situations whereby each person understands the expectations of the other in the particular context. Children are, however, not yet able to view the two perspectives at once.</p>
<p><b>STAGE 3 : Multiple role taking (about ages 10-12)</b>  Children become capable of taking a third-person view, which permits them to understand the expectations of themselves and of others in a variety of situations as if they were spectators.</p>
<p><b>STAGE 4 : Social and conventional system taking (about ages 12-15+)</b>  Each individual involved in a relationship with another understands many of the subtleties of the interactions involved. In addition, a societal perspective begins to develop. That is, actions are judged by how they might influence all individuals, not just those who are immediately concerned.</p>
<p><b>Source:</b>Biehler and Snowman (1993:115)</p>



According to Selman's model, primary school children normally operate at stages 2 and 3, but socially isolated primary school children, rarely progress beyond stages 0 and 1. They are usually unable to take other people's views into account during social interactions and this may make them more unacceptable and rejected.

Selman believes that children who are not as advanced in role-taking skills as their age mates can be helped by encouraging them to become more sensitive to the feelings of others (Biehler and Snowman 1993:115). If children are still functioning at the egocentric level, for example, may fail to interpret the behaviour of their peers properly which could result in rejection and even social isolation.

According to Papalia and Olds (1993:453), the relevance of Selman's theory of friendship reasoning to social isolates is that they can be taught how to carry on a conversation, to show interest in others, to give help, suggestions, invitations and advice. When they are able to practise these new skills in a group project with other children, they are better liked and accepted by others and will interact more frequently.

#### **3.4.5 Sullivan's Theory of Social Development.**

Sullivan's theory of social development is classified among the social-cognitive theories because it places great emphasis on the cognitive aspects of children's social development. According to Sullivan's theory, the school years play a crucial and formative role in the child's social development because of the changed relationships they bring with both peers and adults. According to Strommen et al (1977:203), Sullivan believed that the school years are the period in life when children first really begin to become social.

Sullivan identifies seven important stages in social development: infancy, childhood, the juvenile era, preadolescence, early adolescence, adolescence and adulthood (Meyer et al 1990:140). Most primary school children fall between the late juvenile era and early preadolescence stage.

The juvenile era begins when children first start school, bringing with it the changed interpersonal interactions. The preadolescence stage starts after 10 years of age when children begin to show interest in a particular friend, demonstrating real sensitivity to the friend as a person. The two become able to share not only activities, but also triumphs and failures, joys and depression. They show signs of caring about each other in ways not shown towards others before.

According to Hall and Lindzey (1985:191), the juvenile stage is the period for becoming social, for acquiring experiences of social subordination to authority figures outside of the family, for becoming competitive and cooperative and for learning the meaning of ostracism, disparagement and group feeling.

A close examination of Sullivan's stages of social development suggests that the juvenile and preadolescence (the stages at which the primary school children operate) stages are an individual's most important stages of social development. Children's social skills actually start developing at these stages. Any setbacks in social development experienced during these stages will have a significant influence on later social development.

According to Bornstein and Lamb (1992:523), for Sullivan, children gain a more complex understanding of social relationships during preadolescence, as the concepts of equality, mutuality and reciprocity became central to their own close friendships. Hall and Lindzey (1978:191) further stress the importance of the preadolescent period for developing social relationships with peers. According to him, the relatively brief period of preadolescence is marked by the need for an intimate relationship with a peer of the same sex, a chum in whom to confide and with whom to collaborate in meeting the tasks and solving the problems of life. This is an extremely important period because it marks the beginning of genuine human relationships with other people. In earlier periods, the interpersonal situation is characterised by children's dependence on an older person. During preadolescence, children begin to form peer relationships in which there is equality, mutuality and reciprocity between members. Without an intimate companion, the preadolescent becomes the victim of a desperate loneliness.

Sullivan stresses that **social accommodation** takes place when primary school children form new relationships with peers (Strommen et al 1987:204). They learn about the many ways in which

other children differ from themselves, and also how to cope with or accommodate those differences. Social accommodation depends on social cognition, which is the ability to understand other people, to conceptualise their attributes, to recognise what they think, feel or intend. According to Strommen, Sullivan's theory stresses interaction with peers as the major impetus to the process of social accommodation. Social isolates lack social cognition which makes them indifferent and insensitive to other children's feelings. They may respond to other children's behaviours inappropriately, which may cause them to be rejected and even isolated by their peers.

According to Sullivan's theory, younger children's recognition of familiar feelings in familiar situations is primarily identification or projection of their own feelings rather than recognition of the other person's feelings. But by preadolescence it is clear that children are capable of acquiring the ability to recognise the feelings of others.

Socially isolated primary school children may still be unable to recognise the feelings of others in social interactions. Insensitivity to others' feelings may result in their being disliked and more likely to be rejected and isolated by the people around them.

Meyer et al (1989:135) point out that personification is an important component in Sullivan's theory. Personification is an image children form of themselves or others in interpersonal relationships. These images may be relatively accurate or entirely distorted because they are formed from experiences that arise from the extent to which needs are satisfied in interpersonal relationships, or the extent to which anxiety is dealt with. Interpersonal experiences that lead to need satisfaction are inclined to produce positive images, while experiences leading to anxiety are inclined to produce negative images.

As children begin to differentiate themselves from their environment, they start forming personifications of the self. The personification of the "good me" develops out of personal experiences, such as being accepted in interpersonal relationships. The personification of the "bad me" develops from experiences of anxiety that can be caused by disapproval and rejection. Socially isolated children have presumably experienced anxiety because of rejection or isolation and have developed a "bad me" personification of self in relation to social relationships.

### **3.5 AGENTS OF SOCIALISATION**

The general community is made up of many groups that play a part in socialising an individual. These groups or agents of socialisation exert their influence in different ways and at different times. The agents have their own functions in socialisation, sometimes complimenting each other and sometimes contradicting each other. The family, the school, the peer group and the media are among these socialising agents (Berns 1985:37).

Thompson (1993:376) indicates that social agents not only influence children's social development but also affect their emotional development. They regulate the contexts in which emotional arousal can occur and actively instruct and coach children about permitted and prohibited emotional experience. These social agents thus have a tremendous influence on children's behaviour.

#### **3.5.1 The family as a socializing agent.**

The family functions as a system of interaction and the way it conducts personal relationships has a very powerful effect on children's psychosocial development. Berns (1985:43) notes that through various interactions with family members, children develop patterns for establishing relationships with others. These patterns are expressed and further developed in relationships with peers, authority figures and co-workers. The family is children's primary socialisation agent, and the type of family relationships that exist between family members is the type of behaviour patterns children will exemplify outside the family situation.

The family is regarded as the pre-eminent socialisation context because the children's earliest experiences occur within it and more time is consumed in family interaction than in interaction with other socialising agents (Hartup and Moore 1990:1). Family relationships are usually considered the well-springs of social competence and most theories of personality development attribute effectiveness and success in later functioning to the formation of smooth-running and secure relationships in the family.

According to Horton and Hunt (1984:240), one of the many ways in which the family socialises children is through providing models for children to copy. The parents of socially isolated children presumably do not provide suitable role models, models with good inter-relation skills for their children to follow. Mussen et al (1990:435) note that a parent's style of interacting with his or her child may serve as a model for the child's approach to strangers who are potential friends.

According to Pettit et al (1988:119), social skills necessary to effect successful entry into the peer group are learned in part through early family experience and it is possible to develop family-based preventative interventions that can be implemented before children experience the negative consequences of peer rejection.

Fogel and Melson (1988:435) state that parent-child relationships during middle childhood will be affected by changes in the family, such as the birth and development of siblings, changes in the parents' employment status and changes in the marital relationship, particularly conflict, separation and divorce.

With regard to discipline in parent-child relationships, Fogel and Melson (1988:437) point out that discipline techniques that combine warmth with an emphasis on the consequences of one's actions are associated with the development of conscience and more mature moral judgement as well as prosocial behaviour. On the other hand, direct physical coercion or power assertion is associated with aggression in children, low self-esteem and less advanced moral prosocial development. Social isolates presumably may have been brought up with disciplinary techniques of direct physical coercion or power assertion because such discipline tends to bring about unsocial and aggressive behaviours in children, which predisposes them to be rejected by their peers.

According to Papalia and Olds (1993:456), the stage of middle childhood is a transitional stage of **coregulation**, in which parent and child share power, "parents continue to exercise general supervisory control, while children begin to exercise moment- to-moment self-regulation". Coregulation reflects the child's developing self-concept. As children begin to coordinate their own wishes with societal demands, they are more likely to anticipate how other people will react to what they do, or to accept a reminder from parents that others will think better of them if they behave appropriately.

Social isolates, then, may experience difficulty coordinating their wishes with societal demands. They may insist on their own wishes being met, with disregard for societal approval. Such behaviour may therefore be seen to be in opposition to those expected from the people around them and this may lead to their being disliked and rejected.

According to Papalia and Fogel, styles of disciplining children affect the type of behaviour patterns they will display outside the family situation. Clearly, harsh and coercive disciplinary techniques could result in certain types of antisocial behaviours in children. It can lead to aggression outside the family situation and this could be one of the reasons that leads to rejection of the child by his peers. Mussen et al (1990:435) also strongly suggested that children of disagreeable, demanding and highly controlling mothers were characteristically preoccupied with themselves and with getting their own way when interacting with other children, behaviour that hardly makes them acceptable as friends.

Mussen et al (1990:435) also stress that family relationships affect social adjustments outside the home. When family relationships are favourable, children's social adjustments to people outside the home are better than in cases where family relations are stressful. Some of the many unfavourable conditions that lead to stressful family relationships are divorce, single-parents, step-parents, working parents and large families. Belsky (1990:886), Thompson (1993:373) Crouch and Milner (1993:52) and others indicate that the above factors have a detrimental effect on children's socialisation process. It is not possible to discuss the effects of all these factors on children's socialisation process here, but since divorce seems to be on the increase in most societies, only its effects will be discussed.

According to Doyle et al (1994:364), who found differences in children's friendships for single- and two-parent families, spousal relationships affect aspects of children's peer relations. Papalia and Olds (1993:460) state that divorce between parents usually comes as a shock to children. During the process of adjustment children of divorcing parents feel afraid of the future and guilty about their own role in causing the divorce. They feel rejected when one parent moves out and lose interest in schoolwork and in social life. Sears et al (1991:295) maintain that children think that they have in some way caused their parents' marriage to end and the legacy of this self-blame can result in persistent low self-esteem - an enduring belief that one is unlovable and unworthy

of affection. This low self-esteem is also clearly linked to loneliness because people (children) who lack self-confidence may be less willing to take risks in social situations and may subtly communicate a sense of worthlessness to others.

Rubenstein and Shaver (Sears et al 1991:295) also found that children of divorce see other people as rejecting and unreliable. If children perceive a parent as unresponsive or unreliable, they may begin to view other people as untrustworthy and relationships as undependable. Such a "model" or image makes it harder for the individual to form rewarding relationships.

From the above studies it is evident that divorce negatively affects the child's socialisation process and predisposes them to becoming social isolates. Baker et al (1993:554) sum up the negative effects of poor parent-child relationships on peer relationships. According to her, rejected peer status in the classroom is related to family factors which promote and maintain the problems rejected children experience (such as aggression, withdrawn behaviour, negative traits, antisocial behaviour and inadequate friendship skills). Specifically, children who are rejected by their peers are more likely than average children to have experienced parental divorce, to have fewer adults living in the household, and to report low supervision and high authoritarian parenting.

### **3.5.2 The school as a socializing agent**

The most powerful socialising influence of the school according to Berns (1985:172) lies in those who translate programme goals into action, namely, the teachers. Teachers understand children's needs, interests and abilities and can feel empathy for children's fears of failure. They have the ability to encourage children to explore, to satisfy their natural curiosity, to love learning, to deal with positions of authority, to cooperate with others, to cope with problems and to become competent.

Mussen et al (1990:526) is of the opinion that teachers influence children's socialisation process through praise, punishment and serving as models. Rewards and punishment, if not administered judiciously, can also have a damaging effect on children's socialisation process. If, for example, praise is delivered randomly or unsystematically rather than contingently, it could prove ineffective.

Teachers can enhance learners' self-esteem and thereby facilitate their social development through honest recognition and praise, using encouragement, respecting the learners' opinions and helping learners become competent (Hendrick 1988:128). In addition to competence in activities and motor skills, interpersonal competence should also be rewarded. Children who feel that they can get along with others, that they are liked by them and that they generally manage to have their needs met are likely to feel pretty adequate and will engage in interpersonal relations with others with some degree of success.

Hendrick stresses further that teachers can help children discover the pleasures of friendship. According to him, teachers can facilitate friendliness by using reinforcement to reduce isolated behaviour. This can be achieved by teachers providing some kind of social dividend whenever children approach groups or interact with them but withholding such recognition when children withdraw and play by themselves. Teachers can also increase disliked children's social skills by teaching them social skills that make them more acceptable to the other children. For example, children who have learned to ask for what they want are generally more welcome than ones who rush in and grab whatever appeals to them.

Mussen et al (1990:530) maintain that teachers' actions can serve as models for learners' behaviour. Children tend to imitate most of the teachers' behaviours. Lewin (Berns 1985:172) compared the effects of three leadership styles of teachers (authoritarian, democratic and laissez-faire) on three groups of ten year-old boys and found that the style of leadership had a definite effect on the interactions in each group. The boys in the authoritarian situation showed significantly more aggression towards one another and were much more discontented than the boys in the democratic condition. The boys in the democratic situation showed less hostility and more enjoyment, and continued to work, even when the leader left the room. The laissez-faire group accomplished relatively little, the boys were frequently bored and spent much time "fooling around".

Hendrick (1988:206) points out that one of the ways in which children learn attitudes is by observing teacher models. Therefore teachers need to control their own tempers, since by doing so they provide a model of self-control for children to copy. Social isolates will benefit by



developing social skills if placed in classes where the teachers are responsive and democratic and exemplify social interactive behaviour.

### **3.5.3 Peers as socialisation agents**

As mentioned, primary school children are at a stage where they show greater interest in peer activities than in activities involving other adults or parents. This is often referred to as the "gang age" period. Accordingly, peers play a greater role in primary school children's socialisation than any other agent.

Middle childhood is a when children spend more time away from home with other children (Fogel and Melson 1988:448). Their relations with other children assume greater importance during these years. Fullerton and Ursano (1994:43) and Nelson and Israel (1991:147) point out that peer relationships provide the opportunity for learning specific skills that may not be available in other social relationships. Peer interaction plays a unique and essential role in developing sociability and attachment, controlling aggression, socialisation of sexuality and gender roles, moral development and developing empathy.

Bornstein and Lamb (1992:540) also contend that peer groups offer children a context for learning about themselves and others. Children's initial dyadic experiences with friends assist them in acquiring the appropriate social skills necessary for peer acceptance. Once children are accepted by their peers, they are afforded the opportunity to explore the group setting. It is in this milieu that they learn about common goals, cooperation and the complex interrelationships that comprise a group's structure. Zabatany et al (1990:1077) concur with this, stating that children learn skills for sociability and intimacy and get a sense of belonging through the peer groups.

When children play with their peers, they experience the exchange of ideas, perspectives, roles and actions. From social negotiation, discussion and conflict with peers, children learn to understand others' thoughts, emotions and intentions. In turn, armed with these new social understandings, children are able to think about the consequences of their social behaviours, not only for themselves but also for others. The development of these social-cognitive abilities leads to the production of socially competent behaviours (Bornstein and Lamb 1992:561).

From the above it is clear that peer groups play a very significant role in primary school children's socialisation, having their greatest impact on helping children learn how to get along in society. However, as mentioned earlier, the only negative aspect of peer groups is the pressure to conform in situations that become destructive and make people act against their own better judgement.

Problem with peers is one of the most frequently mentioned problems in referrals to mental health centres (Nelson and Israel 1991:149). Problems in social relationships are explicitly part of the diagnostic criteria (according to the DSM-III) for a wide variety of disorders, such as conduct disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, avoidant disorder, social phobia and antisocial personality disorder. Successful peer relations may therefore help ensure the development of social competence and serve as a preventative function, thereby reducing the likelihood of these disorders occurring. Nelson further identifies three ways which usually increase social competence and enhance peer acceptance. Since a detailed account of these will be given in the last chapter, only a summary of them will be given here. The three ways are:

- 1) **Responding positively to peers.** Global characteristics, such as friendliness and outgoingness, and certain specific behaviours, such as giving attention and approval, submitting to another's wishes, giving things to others and other prosocial behaviours, have consistently been associated with peer acceptance.
- 2) **Perspective taking and accurate communication.** This involves the ability to adopt another person's perspective and communicate accurately from that perspective. This skill has been found to be an important aspect of social development.
- 3) **Initiating interactions.** This involves the ability and confidence to engage in social contact by initiating interaction, such as greeting, offering information, extending offers of inclusion, and asking for information.

#### *3.5.3.1 Acceptance and rejection by peer groups*

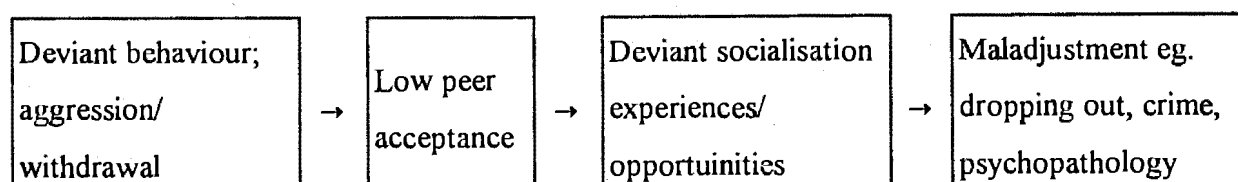
Before reviewing the factors that affect the acceptance and rejection of children by their peer groups, it is essential to keep in mind the distinction made in chapter 1 between rejected and

neglected children. Rejected children are actively disliked by their peers because of characteristics, such as aggression, unsportingness or dishonesty, while neglected children are shy and withdrawn and are not actively disliked by children around them. From this distinction between rejected and neglected children it should be noted that rejected children actively predispose themselves to being excluded from peer groups while this may not be the situation in the case of neglected children.

Mussen et al (1990:439) give a concise description of the characteristics of popular, rejected and neglected children. Popular children are readily accepted by a group and are friendly, more outgoing, more adept at initiating and maintaining social interactions, more enthusiastic and kinder, have a moderately high self-esteem and are more cooperative. Rejected children are more frequently initiators or targets of teasing, fighting and arguing, act immaturely, are antisocial and disruptive, and display inappropriate or deviant behaviour. Neglected children, on the other hand, are shy, withdrawn and passive, lack social skills and are ignored by the people around them.

Both Page (1992:154) and Lerner et al (1991:301) find that children are sometimes rejected or neglected for reasons they cannot change or understand, such as, physical appearance, way of dressing or accent. Sometimes children are teased and ostracised from the group because of their names. The effect of these factors on social isolation is discussed section 3.4.2 and in chapter 2. However, Parker and Asher's findings (Williams and Gilmour 1994:1006) should be kept in mind. According to them, the processes involved in peer interaction are critical for the formation of healthy adjustment. Secondly, children who fail to experience inclusion by their peers are deprived of necessary sources of support in their social development. Figure 3.2 represents a causal model of adjustment difficulties.

**FIGURE 3.2 CAUSAL MODEL OF ADJUSTMENT DIFFICULTIES**



**Source:** Williams and Gilmour (1994:1006)

According to this model, both rejected (aggressive) and neglected (shy/withdrawn) primary school children are at risk of not being accepted by their peers and subsequently suffer from maladjustment in life.

Sears et al (1991:292) highlight the personality factors associated with lonely children. According to him, lonely children tend to be shy, more self-conscious and less assertive. Lonely children tend to have low self-esteem and, in some cases, poor social skills. Loneliness is also associated with anxiety and depression. Several of these personality factors can be both a cause and a consequence of loneliness. For example, people with low self-esteem may be less willing to take risks in social settings. This could make it harder for them to form relationships, thereby increasing their loneliness. The experience of being lonely for a long time may lead children to see themselves as social failures and that might cause a drop in self-esteem.

Rubin et al (1993:519) point out that when socially withdrawn children recognise their failure and state within the peer group, they develop negative self-perceptions of social skills and internalised feelings of loneliness. Bullock (1992:95) also maintains that a significant percentage of children are rejected or neglected during middle childhood which puts them at risk of later problems. More immediately, not having friends contributes to loneliness, low self-esteem and inability to develop social skills. However, identification and intervention may help modify the negative experiences that some of these children encounter and prevent later problems.

### **3.6 FRIENDSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

Friendships represent another important type of peer relationship (Vandell and Hembree 1994:462). Friendship is distinguished from peer social status by its directionality and specificity. Whereas peer status is unilateral and measures the extent to which a child is liked or accepted by the peer group, friendship is a dyadic relationship requiring mutual selection between two specific children. There are notable differences between the two types of relationships, namely, interaction with multiple classmates (peer status) increases the breadth of children's social experiences, whereas interactions with close friends present a depth of experiences. Both experiences are important to the development of social competencies.

Bornstein and Lamb (1992:528) maintain that friendship reflects the presence of a close, mutual and dyadic bilateral relationship and its most important function is that it offers children an extrafamilial base of security from which they may explore the effects of their behaviours on themselves, their peers and their environments. During middle childhood, friendships facilitate the development of knowledge about behavioural norms which help children learn the skills necessary for successful self-presentation. The ability to form successful friendship is thus a stepping stone for acceptance within a wider circle of friends (peer groups).

Wentzel and Erdley (1993:819) indicate that knowledge in solving interpersonal problems in an effective and adaptive way is an important aspect of social competence. Both appropriate and inappropriate strategies for making friends are significantly related to peer acceptance. The cognitive aspects also have a bearing on children's friendship development. Keller and Wood (1989:820) (see section 3.4.4) further support this relationship between the cognitive and social aspects of development.

Friendship expectations (ie, the behaviour and attitudes expected from friends) play an important role in friendship development during middle childhood (Clark and Bittle 1992:115). Gender influences the characteristics that children find important in best friendships and the way they evaluate their friendships. Girls have greater expectations regarding the desirable characteristics of a best friend than boys. Girls more than boys also expect friends to be kind and provide empathic understanding. Variables contributing to friendship development in middle childhood differ between boys and girls.

According to Samter (1992:213), lonely children possess several key personality and communicative traits that render improbable the kind of sustained interaction friendship requires. For example, children who experience loneliness tend to be shy, introverted, anxious, prone to depression and reticent to engage in face-to-face conversation. In comparison to non-lonely individuals, lonely children engage in conversations that are more self-focused and passive, ask fewer questions, change the topic more frequently and respond more slowly to statements.

Schneider et al (1994:326) give seven salient characteristics that serve as building blocks for children's friendship development:

- **Propinquity.** Proximity increases the opportunities for initial causal encounters and reduces the amount of effort required to maintain contact between potential friends.
- **Shared activities.** Common pastimes are usually seen as the substance of young children's friendship.
- **Similarity.** Friends appear to be more similar than non-friends in terms of age, sex, race and social status.
- **Tangible support, instrumental assistance.** Children expect material or instrumental assistance from friends.
- **Intimacy and self-disclosure.** For both girls and boys, there is more intimate sharing of feelings and experiences in intensive dyadic relationships than in interactions with non-friends. Intimacy within friendship appears to become increasingly important in middle childhood and early adolescence.
- **Trust.** Interpersonal trust is an expectation for friendship from 6 years of age through to middle childhood.
- **Reciprocity.** Higher levels of mutual social responsiveness are found in children's interactions with friends than with more causal acquaintances.

Socially isolated children are either denied the characteristics that help to induce friendships (such as propinquity) or fail to display the characteristics (such as trust) which are prerequisites for successful friendship formation.

Bigelow and La Gaipa (Clark and Ayers 1993:299) show that children develop expectations and notions about the qualities that friends should possess and are attracted to and befriend those who

meet these expectations. The developmental stages of friendship expectations progress from egocentric and concrete to empathic and abstract. Bigelow and La Gaipa propose three stages through which friendship expectancy dimensions progress:

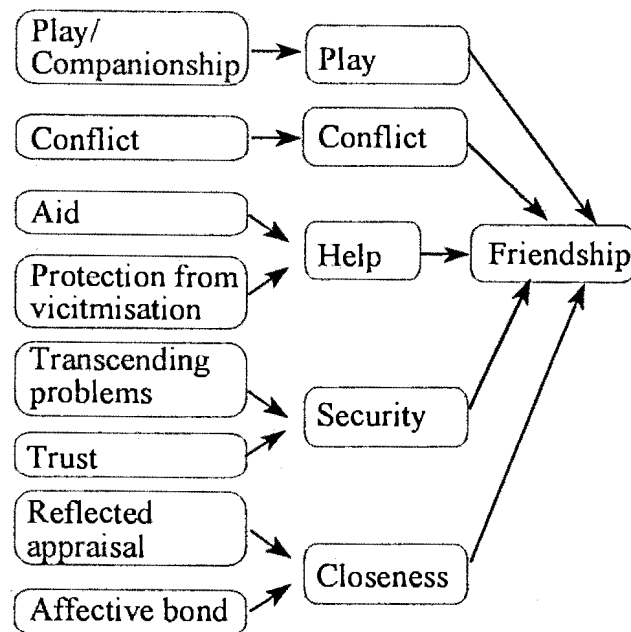
- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| Stage 1 | Emphasis on common activities and propinquity                        |
| Stage 2 | Character admiration   |
| Stage 3 | Concern with loyalty and commitment, empathy and intimacy potential. |

These friendship expectancy dimensions form an additive model. In other words, as age increases, children do not discard previous friendship expectations but, instead, acquire new expectations that begin to dominate their cognitions about friends.

Socially isolated children may not display the characteristics which their peers expect of them. They may display inappropriate qualities, such as cheating, aggression or shyness, which do not attract the people around them. For this reason, peers do not want to befriend them and as a result they are either rejected or neglected.

Bukowski et al (1994:473) propose a model (as shown in Figure 3.3) reflecting five dimensions central to friendship development, namely, companionship, conflict, help, closeness, and security.

**FIGURE 3.3 DIMENSIONS NECESSARY FOR FRIENDSHIP DEVELOPMENT**



Source: Bukowski et al (1994:473)

According to this model, companionship and conflict are regarded as unidimensional constructs whereas help, closeness and security are each conceptualised as consisting of two related subscales. According to Bukowski, companionship is a basic feature or component of children's friendship relations and represents the amount of voluntary time spent together.

Conflict is a correlate of the continuity of friendship relation and is associated with termination of relationships. The importance of help and aid for friendship is also apparent in children's and early adolescents' evaluations of friendship feature. Security is seen as one of the most important properties of children's relationships with their friends. Bukowski states that two central features of friendship are (a) the impression that their friendship is secure and capable of continuing in spite of problems or conflicts, and (b) the belief that they can trust and rely on their friends. Closeness refers to the sense of affection or "specialness" that the child experiences with a friend and the strength of the child's attachment or bond to the friend.

Socially isolated children lack the necessary dimensions that facilitates friendship formation. Socially isolated children fail to display important dimensions, such as help, security and closeness,



and this retards the formation of a dyadic bilateral relationship with others. Furthermore, although a dyadic bilateral relationship may initially develop between socially isolated children and others, this could be terminated due to many conflicts in the initial friendship.

Bukowski's model is useful because it is quite comprehensive and gives people working with social isolates an indication of the various dimensions and subscales within these larger dimensions that influence friendship formation. It makes it easier to identify the actual causes that retard the friendship development of social isolates and affords opportunity to treat the specific causes of social isolation rather than approach the problem through a trial-and-error process.

### **3.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter analysed primary school children's social development, highlighting the possible factors influencing social isolation.

It was found that socially isolated children lack the ability to behave in socially approved ways, which is exemplified by their inability to adopt socially approved roles and attitudes. These deficiencies then, put them at risk of rejection and even isolation.

Primary school children's social development was viewed from the social learning and humanistic perspectives and Erikson's psychosocial, Selman's interpersonal reasoning and Sullivan's social-cognitive theories.

The social learning perspective proposes that since most behaviours are learnt, characteristics which social isolates display can also be learnt, for example, being exposed to models who don't exhibit social interactive behaviours can result in children identifying and displaying similar behaviour patterns. The humanistic perspective places great emphasis on the development of the type of self-concept and self-esteem children develop while interacting with others. Children's self-concept and self-esteem, which are socially determined, account to a large extent for whether they will become social isolates or not.

Erikson's psychosocial perspective also places great emphasis on the type of self-concept children develop, but here the emphasis is on the type of self-concept children develop in relation to their experience of mastery and failure in social settings. Negative self-concepts formed through failure in tasks and social activities lead to withdrawal from social interaction.

Selman's interpersonal reasoning theory stresses children's ability to take another person's view into account during social interaction. Inability to do this can result in rejection and isolation. Sullivan's social cognitive theory highlights the importance of social cognition during social accommodation. Children unable to accommodate differences between themselves and their peers can end up being rejected and even isolated.

The effect of the different socialisation agents viz. the family, peer groups and the school on primary school children's social development was also examined. It was noted that all these agents play a significant role in predisposing children to becoming social isolates. Parental separation, family conflict, divorce, changes in family employment status, rewards and punishment by teachers, physical appearance and body image can have an effect on children's socialisation process and place them at risk of being rejected and isolated by others.

Friendship formation, which is different from normal peer relations, involves a dyadic relationship between two mutually selected children. Children who do not display important characteristics, such as trust and helpfulness, may retard the formation of a dyadic bilateral relationship with another child.

Chapter 4 will discuss the adolescent's physical, cognitive, affective, moral and personality development. Then chapter 5 will deal with the adolescent's social development.

## Chapter 4

### The adolescent's development

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks at the development of the adolescent and considers the physical, cognitive, affective, moral and personality aspects of development. Chapter 5 discusses the social development of the adolescent. While examining these various aspects of development, an attempt will be made to highlight the possible relationship that exists between social isolation and these aspects of development.

#### 4.2 OVERVIEW OF THE PERIOD OF ADOLESCENCE

Many psychologists describe adolescence as a period of "**storm and stress**" because of the many and sudden physical, cognitive, emotional, sexual and personality changes that take place during this stage and the difficult task of the adolescent in dealing with these changes.

Papalia and Olds (1993:483) maintain that adolescence is generally considered to begin at **puberty**, the process that leads to sexual maturity, when a person is able to reproduce.

Studies on changes in behaviour, attitudes and values throughout adolescence reveal that these changes are more rapid and markedly different during the early part of adolescence than the latter stages (Hurlock 1980:222). As a result, adolescence is generally divided into early and late adolescence. Early adolescence extends roughly from 13 to 16 years of age while late adolescence is relatively shorter, extending from 17 to 18 (thus one to two years).

The physical changes that accompany adolescence are inevitable and dramatic. They include rapid increases in height and weight, changes in body proportions, the development of secondary sex characteristics, the maturation of the reproductive capacity and further growth and differentiation

of cognitive abilities. These biological changes and the young person's need to adjust to them differentiate adolescence from earlier periods of development (Conger 1991:70).

From the foregoing it is clear that the period of adolescence is very challenging for individuals because they have to adapt to and cope with the numerous physical and psychological changes taking place within them. In keeping with the aims of the present study, the focus of attention will be on the effect that these changes have on the adolescent's social isolation.

#### 4.3 PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

The onset of adolescence is heralded by significant changes in physical development (Shaffer 1993:176). Children change dramatically in size and shape as they enter the **adolescence growth spurt** (rapid acceleration in height and weight). There are dramatic physical changes that occur during the adolescent years as the child loses the "boyish" or "girlish" look and begin to resemble an adult. Shaffer further stresses that when considering the physical development of adolescents, the dramatic biological upheavals that they experience play a major role in shaping their self-concept. This, in turn, may affect the ways they will relate to other people in life.

Most developmental psychologists concur that the adolescent growth spurt is not uniform but there are some general changes. Body weight begins to increase first, followed four to six months later by rapid increases in height. The most noticeable changes are the widening of the hips for females and the broadening of the shoulders for males. Facial features also assume adult proportions as the forehead protrudes, the nose and jaws become more prominent and the lips enlarge.

According to Papalia and Olds (1993:471), on average, boys begin and end their growth spurt about two years later than most girls. This is the reason girls tend to end up shorter as adults - there is less physical development taking place in girls before the adolescence growth spurt. Although there is not much difference in height between the two sexes during adolescence, they do differ in other physical growth characteristics. Boys develop more muscle mass and strength,

while girls develop more fatty tissue. While boys increase in shoulder width relative to hips, girls increase in hip width relative to the shoulders.

From the literature on adolescent physical development, it would appear that one of the major concerns of adolescents is their perception of their body image (physical attractiveness, body type and body weight) in relation to certain norms set by their peer group. Page (1992:150) also concurs that one of the most consistent findings in the literature on peer relations is the positive relationship between physical attractiveness and sociometric status. The more attractive adolescents are, the higher their social status among peers.

Rice (1992:182) further emphasises the relationship between physical attractiveness and the adolescent's positive self-evaluation, popularity and peer acceptance. Rice concludes that physical attractiveness is an important ingredient in interpersonal attraction. It influences personality development, social relationships and social behaviour. Attractive adolescents are thought of in positive terms: warm, friendly, successful and intelligent. They appear to have higher self-esteem and healthy personality attributes, are better adjusted socially, and possess a wider variety of interpersonal skills.

The literature also reveals that adolescents are affected profoundly by the images of ideal body builds taught by their culture. Most adolescent boys and girls would prefer to be medium types. Tall, skinny boys or girls are unhappy with themselves as are short or fat adolescents. The desire to be thin has almost become an obsession among females in most cultures. If a girl does not have a slim figure, she is likely to be ignored by boys and less likely to be dated. Such social rejection is hard to live with, therefore some girls go to extremes to maintain a slim figure which sometimes leads to anorexia nervosa and bulimia.

According to Noles et al (1985:89), there is a possible link between self-perceived attractiveness and depression. Unattractive persons receive less social reinforcement than their attractive peers and this might result in depression. Taking into account the findings of chapter 2 (section 2.4.2.1) that depression can cause social isolation, it is possible that physical unattractiveness can indirectly lead to social isolation among adolescents.

Lau (1990:113) and Lerner et al (1991:300) also show that physical appearance plays an important part in self-concept development and **friendship formation**. According to them, adolescents' social development is likely to be related to their confidence in their physical image. Physical appearance is a major factor in friendship formation and positive self-perception. Confidence in physical appearance may be related to extraversion, a significant personality trait in social relationships.

Steinberg (1987:457) found that pubertal timing, which has been shown to affect adolescents' peer relations, may be significant mainly in contexts where differences between early and late maturers are salient, such as in the peer group.

Rice (1992:192) highlights the effect that early and late maturation can have on adolescent boys, pointing out that early-maturing boys enjoy considerable social advantages in relation to their peers. Their superior build and athletic skills enhance their social prestige and position. They participate more frequently in extracurricular activities in high school, tend to show more interest in girls and to be popular with them because of superior looks and more sophisticated social interests and skills. Late-maturing boys, on the other hand, suffer socially induced inferiority. A boy who has not reached puberty at the age of fifteen may be shorter and lighter than his early-maturing friends. Accompanying this size difference are marked differences in body build, strength and coordination. Because physical size and motor coordination play such an important role in social acceptance, late maturers develop negative self-perceptions and self-concepts. They have been characterised as less attractive and as feeling inadequate, rejected and dependent. They often become self-conscious. Some withdraw because of their social rejection.

The relationship between the rate of maturation and social status for girls is more complex (Shaffer 1993:181). Although early breast development is associated with favourable body image and increased self-confidence, many studies find that early-maturing girls are somewhat less outgoing and less popular than late maturers during early adolescence. Girls who mature very early are very different in appearance from their female classmates who may tease them. In contrast, late-maturing girls are inevitably more poised, active and popular with peers, and less concerned about and more satisfied with their body image. According to Conger (1991:101), the entire picture changes significantly by late adolescence, however. Early female maturers often rise to positions of

prominence in junior high school where they are more readily accepted by others because they are beginning to look more like grown up women. They begin to attract the attention of older boys and start dating earlier than normal.

Overall, then, it would appear that the advantages of maturing early are greater for males than for females. However, Thornton and Ryckman (1991:86) indicate that for the most part early maturation and physical attractiveness are important components of adolescents' self-esteem across sex and grade level. Early maturation is also associated with greater self-confidence, independence and gregariousness, while late maturation is associated with greater self-doubt, social anxiety and a tendency to withdraw from social situations.

From the foregoing it is evident that physical attractiveness, body image and build, and the rate of maturation of both girls and boys play a significant role in acceptance and rejection by the adolescent peer group. Rauste-von Wright (1989:72) and Tucker (1984:1227) indicate that attractiveness, as rated by self and others, has been found to be moderately associated with various indices of social adjustment and performance, such as positive peer relations and good school grades.

#### **4.4 COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT**

To gain insight into the cognitive development of the adolescent, it is necessary to examine certain theories on the cognitive development of the adolescent. Since Piaget's and the information-processing theories have already been discussed in detail in chapter 2 (section 2.3), these theories will be discussed here. However, only aspects related specifically to the cognitive development of the adolescent will be discussed. A general outline and discussion of key terms involved in each theory are covered in chapter 2 dealing with the cognitive development of the primary school child.

#### 4.4.1 Piaget's theory of cognitive development

As in the model (table 2.1) in chapter 2, the adolescent should be operating at Piaget's **formal operational stage**, which usually begins around the age of 12.

Hamachek (1985:113) discusses this transition from the stage of concrete operations to formal operations. According to her, there is a shift from the concrete, specific, black-and-white type of thinking of the preadolescent years to the more mature abstract reasoning skills associated with adult problem solving. Youngsters between 11 and 15 years of age slowly refine their ability to think in terms of "what may be possible" and go beyond the confines of the more limited "here and now" type of thinking which is characteristic of the elementary age child. During adolescence they develop the capacity for imagining or hypothesising that a certain situation exists, followed by reasoning that considers what might result from such a situation. According to Conger (1991:143) hypothetico-deductive reasoning is an important characteristic of formal thinking. Here adolescents are able to approach problems by trying to imagine all the possible relationships among items in a given body of data. Then through a process that combines logical analysis and experimental verification, they can determine which of the possible relationships actually hold true. In short, adolescents become more capable of hypothetico-deductive thinking, a more scientific way of reasoning.

According to Hamachek (1985:113), the rate of cognitive development varies from adolescent to adolescent because it is not only dependent on the maturation of the nervous system but influenced heavily by each adolescent's specific social environment and experiential history. Two important aspects are evident, namely adolescents are capable of thinking and reasoning logically about hypothetical processes which have no concrete basis and secondly, cognitive development is dependent on their social environment. With regard to socially isolated adolescents, such development will be restricted because of poor social interaction.

Papalia and Olds (1993:517) also attest to the influence of peer interaction on the adolescent's cognitive maturity. According to her, a study of adolescents showed that peer interaction can help advance cognitive maturity and even if young people's neurological development has advanced



enough to allow them to reach the stage of formal reasoning, they may never attain it if they are incapable of interacting socially.

#### *4.4.1.1 Personal and social implications of formal thought*

One of the effects of adolescents' intellectual transformation is a change with regard to egocentrism (Rice 1992:211). Two forms of egocentrism have been identified: **imaginary audience** and **personal fable ideations**. The imaginary audience phenomenon refers to adolescents' feelings that they are constantly "on stage" and much of their energy is spent "reacting to this imaginary audience". This phenomenon comes about because as adolescents develop the capacity to think about their own thoughts, they become acutely aware of themselves, their person, and their ideas; as a result they become egocentric, self-conscious and introspective.

Shaffer (1993:262) defines personal fable, the second form of adolescent egocentrism, as a belief in the uniqueness of oneself and one's thinking. Thus adolescents who are in love for the first time may imagine that nobody else could ever feel or understand the heights of emotion they are experiencing. The personal fable may also lead adolescents to believe that rules that hold for other people don't apply to them.

According to Elkind (Shaffer 1993:263), both forms of adolescent egocentrism could increase as youngsters first acquire formal operations and may gradually decline as older adolescents enter adult roles that require them to consider others' perspectives more carefully. One of the possible problems that can arise is that this supposed decline in egocentrism may not take place. Adolescents then remain egocentric, which can result in conflict with peers, rejection and even social isolation.

Gordon (1988:60) shows how formal operational acquisitions, such as the ability to generate all possible alternatives, evaluate alternatives via propositional logic, engage in perspective taking and reason about probability and chance are relevant for making adaptive life decisions, experiencing true mutuality and empathy, understanding feelings and interpersonal situations and for adaptively altering affective and behavioural reactions through realistic appraisal of life events. Gordon also stresses that the unavailability of formal reasoning powers may place adolescents at a disadvantage

in dealing with many affective and interpersonal issues. Once cognitive delays occur, they may have pervasive effects on a person's ability to adapt and cope with the environment. Such cognitive delays may result from problems with assimilation and accommodation mechanisms because these mechanisms both create and modify cognitive structures. A person may have limited occasion to encounter others' perspectives and therefore find it difficult to adaptively modify personal perspectives when confronted with different views (accommodation). Alternatively, a person may have little occasion to apply attitudes or ideas to realms of knowledge (assimilation). In both cases the cognitive-developmental progress may be hindered.

An inability to use formal reasoning can have the following effects:

- (1) **Inability to envision alternatives.** Difficulty in generating alternatives - or a failure to invoke the combinatorial system- may well contribute to certain interpersonal and affective problems of adolescents. For example, the inability to envision alternatives may play a role in psychological difficulties like depression, where adolescents often experience helplessness and loneliness and are unable to envision possibilities for change. Difficulty in interacting with peers may also stem from an inability to imagine alternatives in social situations. For example, impulsive and conduct-disordered youth have difficulty generating alternative methods of solving interpersonal problems and listing all possible antecedents and consequences in social dilemmas. Such a situation may lead to rejection and social isolation by the peer group.
- (2) **Inability to evaluate alternatives.** Formal reasoners are able to formulate events or situations in propositional terms and generate hypotheses about how their actions affect situations. Formulating hypotheses about interpersonal interactions, systematically varying behaviour and logically evaluating the effect of actions can help adolescents make the first step towards developing theories about how past actions (their own and others) have influenced life events and how future actions might alter them. An inability to carry out the above due to the lack of formal reasoning may prevent adolescents who have chronic difficulty interacting with peers from evaluating alternative courses of action when faced with difficult interpersonal relations.

- (3) **Inability to take perspective.** The ability to decentre - or adapt the point of view of another person - can be important for effective interpersonal functioning in that it allows for optimal engagement in close relationships. An inability to decentre can lead to conflict because of the incapability to distance from the self and to take others' view into account. Continued conflicts will result in rejection and possibly social isolation.
- (4) **Poor reasoning about chance and probability.** The ability to effectively reason about chance and probability represents a significant acquisition of the formal operational stage. When given appropriate information, formal operators are capable of estimating the odds of an event occurring. Certain adolescents, however, seem to have difficulty understanding these notions. Young adolescent delinquents, for example, have been shown to be poor determiners of the likelihood of consequences in social problem-solving tasks. The ability to calculate the probability of events occurring may thus render adolescents' worlds more predictable and manageable, allowing them to plan for appropriate action in a variety of interpersonal situations. Poor reasoning about chance and probability in interpersonal relations could lead to problems and result in rejection and social isolation.

Taking Gordon's findings into account, it can safely be said that problems with the acquisition of formal operational thinking can contribute to certain difficulties in interpersonal relations, while the acquisition of formal reasoning powers may, in many situations, help individuals more effectively understand and interact with others and prevent them from becoming victims of social isolation.

#### **4.4.2 The information-processing approach to cognitive development of the adolescent**

The information-processing model for adolescents proposes similar cognitive structures to those for the primary school children as discussed in chapter 2 (section 2.3.3). Basically, the information-processing approach to cognition emphasises the progressive steps, actions and operations that take place when the adolescent receives, perceives, remembers, thinks about and utilizes information. According to Rice (1992:230), the adolescent receives information, organises

it, stores it, retrieves it, thinks about it and combines it in such a way as to answer questions, solve problems and make decisions.

Linn and Songer (1991:404) point to one major difference between the capacity of information processing between primary school children and adolescents, namely that there is an increase in working-memory capacity. Linn stresses that research shows that the strategies conjectured to develop in adolescence are already in place at younger ages. What adolescents develop, is the ability to apply these strategies to complex problems. Also, with a larger working memory, adolescents can engage in more complex reasoning. For example, a larger working memory permits students to keep track of more variables in an experiment and therefore enables them to solve more complex problems without acquiring more powerful strategies. Also, as adolescents become more familiar with a domain, they can combine information that they previously treated separately and therefore use their processing capacity more efficiently. Thus, students might be able to integrate more intuitive ideas as a result of an increase in processing capacity, or might use the same working memory more efficiently by synthesising a few intuitions around a prototype and then combining the synthesised ideas into a scientific principle.

From the above, it is clear that the information-processing model proposes that much cognitive advancement takes place from the primary school to the adolescent stage, but not due to new cognitive structures being developed during adolescence. Rather it is the advancement of the same cognitive structures, such as the short-term/long-term memory, which were also present in the childhood stage.

According to Conger (1991:152), one very important conclusion that can be drawn from the information processing model, is that information-processing analysis may show that an adolescent who is having difficulty solving a problem may be using inappropriate strategies to solve the problem, is unable to retrieve information from memory or is unable to transfer what was learnt in a previous situation to the current problem. Rice (1992:233) concurs and asserts that adolescents may sometimes make faulty judgements because of inaccurate perception or insufficient information. For example, when two adolescents hear a friend making a critical remark, one adolescent takes it personally and feels insulted while the other does not. The judgements of these two adolescents are based on past experiences. It seems, then, that deficits

on the part of adolescents in interpreting information accurately can lead to the formulation of inappropriate judgements and the display of undesired behaviours in the presence of peers. These judgements and behaviours can then lead to rejection and isolation.

An analysis of the cognitive theories discussed makes it evident that these theories are useful in understanding the relationship between cognitive development and social isolation. The inability of adolescents to use formal operational thought according to Piaget's theory and the inaccurate processing of information according to the information-processing model can contribute to adolescent rejection.

#### **4.5 AFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ADOLESCENT**

In chapter 2 (section 2.1) the term "affective" was defined broadly to cover all non-cognitive characteristics including emotions, moods, attitudes, motivation and anxiety.

As in the case of the affective development of primary school children, the discussion of the affective development of adolescents will concentrate on their emotional development and the emotional problems they experience. We shall also look at the possible relationship between adolescents' emotional development and social isolation. Campos and Campos (1989:395) define emotion as the process of establishing, maintaining or disrupting the relations between the person and the internal or external environment, which strongly suggests that emotional development can affect adolescents' social relationships with their peers.

##### **4.5.1 Overview of adolescent emotional development**

According to Hamachek (1985:109), the emotional life of the typical adolescent is a series of fluctuating ups and downs, with the ups being very up and the downs being very down. Emotionally, adolescents tend to be less stable because a great deal is happening in the metamorphosis between childhood and adulthood. As mentioned in section 4.2, the period of adolescence is often referred to as a period of "storm and stress."

Mussen et al (1990:676) describe early adolescence as a period when psychological and psychophysiological disturbances of varying degrees of severity do occur in a significant minority of young people. For some adolescents, the disturbances may be relatively minor and transient, for others, it may be severe and resistant to treatment.

Barbarin (1993:383) maintains that emotional development is a key factor leading up to adolescent psychosocial outcomes, such as social competence and psychological health. In addition, it can be implicated in the formation of a favourable self-concept, prosocial behaviour like altruism, sensitivity to interpersonal cues and a capacity for intimate social relations. At the same time, it can also be linked to anxiety, guilt, aggression, impulsiveness, delinquency, substance abuse and hopelessness when individuals veer off the expected developmental course.

Among the most frequently emotional problems encountered during adolescence which have an effect on social relations are anxiety disorders, depression and aggression. Since it is not possible to review the full range of adolescent disturbances and their consequences in the scope of this chapter, only the three mentioned will be discussed.

#### **4.5.2 Anxiety disorders**

There are three main types of illnesses in this category, generalised anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder and phobic disorders (Rice 1992:276).

##### **4.5.2.1 *Generalised anxiety***

Adolescents suffering from generalised anxiety disorder tend to make an enormous catastrophe out of the smallest mishap and believe that the perceived catastrophe exists. People in this state cannot realistically deal with the situation, therefore it is impossible to reason with them about these feelings.

Such internal anxiety may be accompanied by feelings of inferiority, sleep disturbances, nervousness, tearfulness, respiratory or digestive disturbances, dizziness or an increase in psychomotor activity to try to escape or cover the fear.

According to Conger (1991:548), there are three major categories of anxiety disorders during adolescence:

- Separation anxiety. The predominant disturbance is excessive anxiety upon separation from major attachment figures or from home or other familiar surroundings.
- Contact anxiety. This is anxiety caused by contact with strangers or by social situations, and can interfere severely with social functioning with peers.
- Over-anxious disorder. Here the sources of anxiety are generalised and diffuse and lead to unrealistic worry about future events, preoccupation with the appropriateness of past behaviour, overconcern about competence, and marked feelings of tension or inability to relax.

The first two types of anxiety disorders seem to be related to the adolescents' social interaction and isolation. Conger (1991:552) is of the opinion that **school refusal** (sometimes called **school phobia**) is one of the symptoms of separation anxiety. Adolescents who remain overly dependent and are uncertain about their sexual identity, or who fear heterosexual relationships, may become acutely anxious in school when peers begin to organise their social life around dating, parties and other heterosexual relationships. It would seem then that there is a possible link between separation anxiety and refusal to form relationships with others, especially those from the opposite sex.

The second type of anxiety, which is aroused by contact with strangers or being part of a social situation, clearly demonstrates the relationship between anxiety and social isolation. It would seem that adolescents who experience anxiety in social situations tend to withdraw from relationships with peers and others in order to overcome such an anxiety-provoking situation. Lerner (1988:365) shows that anxious adolescents often have difficulty with friendships and peer relationships, and this factor is correlated with adolescent social adjustment problems.

#### 4.5.2.2 *Obsessive compulsive disorders*

An obsessive-compulsive disorder is an anxiety state characterised by obsessive thoughts or overwhelming urges to engage in repetitive behaviour. Such compulsive behaviour include

cleaning rituals like the washing the hands, repetitive performance of tasks already completed and following detailed rituals. Obsessions and compulsions can often develop from traumatic experiences that may have been only partly suppressed. There is no available research evidence that shows any relationship between obsessive-compulsive behaviour and social isolation. However, if such behaviours are noticed by friends, they might easily view the obsessive-compulsive adolescent as abnormal, which, in turn, could lead to rejection.

#### 4.5.2.3 *Phobic disorders*

Rice (1992:279) describes phobia as an excessive, uncontrolled fear that usually develops during childhood through exposure to several traumatic episodes which children subsequently repress in memory. A phobia may develop out of reaction to fear or guilt.

Of all the possible phobias from which adolescents may suffer, social phobia is the only one relevant to the present topic. Social phobias are characterised by extreme fear of social interactions, particularly with strangers and where the person might be evaluated negatively, such as on a first date. Also related to social phobia is *homilophobia*, which is the fear that other people may find something wrong with one's appearance, attire or demeanour.

It is evident, then, that social phobias, more especially homilophobia, can restrict adolescents' social interaction thereby causing them to become isolated.

#### 4.5.3 **Depression**

Depression is the most common emotional experience among adolescents (Hamachek 1985:110). Rice (1992:277) describes it as characterised by feelings of sadness, despair, melancholia, listlessness and a reduction of mental activity and physical drive. Depressed adolescents may complain of feelings of emptiness, isolation and alienation. They usually show deficits in social and cognitive functioning.



In their studies on the etiology of depression, Raphael et al (1990:689), King (1991:123) and Robertson (1989:125) point to the fact that death or divorce/separation of parents is one of the most significant factors contributing to depression.

According to Nolen-Hoeksema and Girgus (1994:424), female adolescents are about twice as likely to be depressed as males. One explanation for this is that girls are more likely than boys to be dissatisfied with their bodies during the beginning of puberty, and thus become more prone to depression. Girls have a more negative body image than boys and this sometimes leads many girls to engage in chronic dieting, which, in itself, can contribute to a sense of helplessness and depression.

Rice (1992:277) describes four types of depression experienced by adolescents:

- (1) **Transient depression.** Here the depressive symptoms, such as crying, have a high probability of being resolved with increasing age. This is basically a temporary state of depression.
- (2) **Acute depression.** Adolescents may complain of boredom and social isolation and actually spend less time interacting with peers, siblings and parents. They may cry easily and daydream a lot. The episode usually lasts a fairly short time and may be brought on by physical illness or problems, trouble with the law, trouble at school or with drugs, loss of intimate relationships or inadequate family relationships.
- (3) **Chronic Depression.** This is a more severe type and the adolescent's depression is the result of repeated experiences of rejection, severe emotional trauma or a loss of love, either of a family member or a friend. The depressed mood may be evident for years and is usually accompanied by psychotic features and loss of pleasure in almost everything.
- (4) **Masked Depression.** This type of depression is more difficult to recognise because in their efforts to deny depression, the depressed adolescents may become overactive and engage in various types of acting-out behaviours, such as aggression, truancy and delinquency.

Koenig et al (1994:27) point out that depression and loneliness are highly correlated. However gender differences do emerge since depression is found to have a greater association with loneliness for boys than girls. Jewell et al (1990:92) found that depressed adolescents experienced other people as less friendly and spent less time in public places. By comparison with girls, depressed boys spend significantly less time with friends, which would suggest that social isolation is associated with depressed boys rather than depressed girls.

It would appear then, that as in the case of primary school children, depression can be considered one of the main affective factors contributing to adolescent loneliness and social isolation.

According to Kovacs and Goldston (1991:389), the irritability of depressed youth and the non-verbal manifestations of depression, such as avoiding eye contact, may be perceived by others as noxious, may discourage overtures and attention from other individuals, and thus may increase the youngsters' social isolation. Depressed youth therefore may be deprived of social interactions that reinforce age-appropriate social skills that are necessary for continued development of the understanding and management of interpersonal situations.

#### **4.5.4 Aggression**

Quay (Nieminen and Matson 1989:247) view adolescents with conduct disorders as those who are aggressive and who destroy property, defy authority and often frighten and disturb adults. Knapczk (1992:247) notes that the aggressive acts of adolescents with conduct disorders can contribute to such problems as ineffective peer relations and exclusion from positive learning opportunities.

Nieminen and Matson (1989:182) point out that there is a significant relationship between depression and aggression. The correlation indicates that students who report conduct disorder problems are also likely to indicate that they have many depressive symptoms.

Allberg and Chu Lily (1990:347) note that adolescents who come from families in turmoil, families suffering from weak, ineffective structures and impaired communication networks, families who

have experienced early, irreplaceable loss or are experiencing devastating problems, such as alcoholism, physical abuse, emotional abuse, do not get the opportunity to learn effective coping skills. These adolescents are then left to deal with the problems and stresses in their lives without adequate resources. They may fail to cope effectively with life stresses and become socially withdrawn, experience great difficulty in communicating with others, and often engage in coping behaviour (such as drug abuse and acting out behaviour) that only serves to escalate their feelings of pain and separateness.

Panella and Henggeler (1986:1) also reveal that conduct-disordered and anxious-withdrawn adolescents display less social competence and less positive affect than well-adjusted adolescents when interacting with both friends and strangers.

From the above, it becomes evident that, because of inadequate and inappropriate coping skills learnt during stressful life experiences, socially withdrawn and isolated adolescents are more likely to engage in conduct disorders.

#### **4.6 MORAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE ADOLESCENT**

Important moral changes take place during adolescence. In studying adolescent morality, Hurlock (1980:243) concludes that adolescents are expected to replace the specific moral concepts of childhood with general moral principles and to formulate these into a moral code which will act as a guide to their behaviour. Equally important, they must now exercise control over their behaviour, a responsibility formerly assumed by parents and teachers.

Mitchell (Hurlock 1980:243) lists five fundamental moral changes that take place during adolescence:

- (1) The individual's normal outlook becomes progressively more abstract and less concrete.
- (2) Moral convictions become more concerned with what is right and less concerned with what is wrong. Justice emerges as a dominant moral force.

- (3) Moral judgements becomes increasingly cognitive. This encourages the adolescent to analyze social and personal codes more vigorously than during childhood and to decide on moral issues.
- (4) Moral judgement becomes less egocentric.
- (5) Moral judgement becomes psychologically expensive in the sense that it takes an emotional toll and creates psychological tension.

Chapter 2 (section 2.5) deals with Piaget, Kohlberg and Selman's theories on moral development. The focus here will be on Piaget and Kohlberg's theories and their implications for adolescent rejection and social isolation.

#### 4.6.1 Piaget's theory of moral development

According to Piaget's stages of moral development, adolescents have passed from the first stage of **morality of constraint** (or obedience) to the second stage of **morality of cooperation** (or reciprocity). Coupled with this progress, adolescents pass from heteronomy to autonomy in making moral judgements. Rules are no longer external laws to be considered sacred because they are laid down by adults, but are social creations arrived at through a process of free decision and thus deserving of mutual respect and autonomy. According to Piaget (Rice 1992:468), the second stage of moral development gradually supersedes the first as children reach adolescence.

Based on Piaget's theory of moral development, Shaffer (1993:552) stresses that both cognitive maturation and social experience play an important role in the transition from heteronomous to autonomous morality. This is also supported by Stewart (1987:4666) and Moen (1989:2529) who confirm that mental capacity is a necessary component of moral development.

An important prerequisite for moral judgement to develop from a heteronomous to an autonomous stage is the internalisation of self-accepted rules. This occurs when people begin to feel from within the desire to treat others as they themselves would wish to be treated (Rice 1992:466). With regard to socially isolated adolescents, this transition is presumably restricted in the absence

of reciprocal relationships. Conversely, it can also be said that socially isolated adolescents have not fully internalised self-accepted rules and as a result lack mutual respect for others and fail to treat others as they themselves would wish to be treated. This shortcoming will therefore lead to conflicts and possibly further rejection and isolation.

Another contributory factor in adolescent social isolation is **punishment of reciprocity** - a self-imposed punishment. This comes into operation when individuals, in violation of their own conscience, are denied normal social relations and are isolated from the group by their own actions (Rice 1992:466). A typical example of this would be a situation where adolescents may have been involved in a conspiracy against their peers and later encounter guilt feelings. This may then prevent them from facing their friends (because of the fear of being caught out) and this can lead to social isolation.

#### **4.6.2 Kohlberg's theory of moral development**

According to Kohlberg's theory of moral development (see section 2.5.2), children and adolescents tend to progress through six stages of moral thought, which are divided into three major levels, namely **preconventional**, **conventional** and **postconventional** levels.

During adolescence, conventional moral thinking tends to be dominant (Conger 1991:469). In conventional morality, a focus on societal needs and values takes precedence over individual interests. Initially, the adolescent's actions involve having good motives and showing concern for others.

It is important to note that although most adolescents should be operating at the conventional level, not all adolescents reach this stage and some may still be operating at the egocentric preconventional level. Rice (1992:468) points out that within any one age group, individuals are at different levels of development in their moral thinking: some are retarded, while others are more advanced. However, children with extensive peer group participation advance considerably more quickly through the successive stages of development in moral thinking than those with lower peer group participation. Therefore socially isolated adolescents may be restricted in their development from the preconventional to the conventional and later postconventional stages of moral thinking.

This will inevitably cause them to display behaviours that are morally inappropriate to their age group, which may lead to rejection.

Adolescents' moral judgements correlate highly with their IQ (Rice 1992:470). As adolescents participate more in social groups, they lose some of their cognitive naivete and adopt a more sophisticated view of authority and social relationships, which enables them to acquire a greater capacity for moral thinking. It seems that adolescents' participation within the peer group could possibly promote higher forms of moral thinking, while socially isolated adolescents would be restricted in attaining these higher forms.

Adolescents entering the postconventional stage (which is characterised by taking the perspective of each and every person who could potentially be affected by a decision and arriving at a solution that would be regarded as "just" by all) are usually confronted with a wider range of conflicting pressure for the adoption and modification of personal values than is the case of the preadolescent (Conger 1991:474). This, however, makes it difficult for young people to progress from a "father knows best" sort of preadolescent moral thought to the beginning of postconventional thought with its emphasis on social consensus. The peer group may be urging one set of values and the parents another. In most cases, the adolescent may be motivated to conform to the values of peers in order to gain acceptance or avoid rejection.

From the above it becomes evident that adolescents who cannot break away from the preadolescent type of moral thinking and adopt either conventional or postconventional modes of thinking are more vulnerable to rejection by the peer group.

#### **4.7 PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT**

To gain insight into the personality development of adolescents certain theories of personality will be examined. For continuity, Erikson's and Rogers' theories discussed in the personality development of primary school children will also be discussed here. Kelly's theory will be excluded since it is more generalised and applicable to all age groups. Kelly's concepts and principles related to social isolation are similar for both primary school children and adolescents.

#### 4.7.1 Erikson's theory of personality

According to Erikson's theory of personality development (see section 2.6.1), the crisis in the personality development of the adolescent is to resolve the conflict between identity and identity confusion in order to become a unique adult with a definite role in life. During this fifth stage of psychosocial development, adolescents seek to determine their own sense of self (identity), including the role they will play in society.

Erikson sees the prime danger of this stage as identity (or role) confusion, which can express itself in a young person's taking an excessively long time to reach adulthood. Erikson (in Papalia and Olds 1993:542) is of the opinion that a certain amount of identity confusion is normal and this accounts for the chaotic nature of much adolescent behaviour. Adolescents may also show confusion by regressing into childishness to avoid resolving conflicts or by committing themselves impulsively to certain courses of action.

From the previous paragraph, it can be assumed that this type of regression on the part of adolescents may contribute to rejection by their peers. An adolescent displaying childish behaviours in the presence of peers who have already acquired a sense of self (identity) would regard such behaviours as inappropriate and reject or even isolate that person.

Papalia and Olds (1993:543) note that the fundamental "virtue" that arises from this identity crisis is the **virtue of fidelity** - sustained loyalty, faith, or a sense of belonging to a loved one, or to friends and companions. It also involves identifying with a set of values, an ideology, a religion, a political movement and a creative pursuit.

According to Erikson people acquire an identity by getting information about role expectations during social interaction. Lavoie (1994:17) stresses that the dynamics of identity formation involves synthesis and resynthesis of previous identifications as well as differentiation and integration. Inherent in these dynamics is the realisation that identity occurs within a context of relationships and roles. With regard to socially isolated adolescents, acquisition of such an identity would presumably be restricted because of the lack of interaction with peers.

Marcia (Fogel and Nelson 1988:502) notes that during their search for identity, adolescents can be classified into one of the following four categories:

- (1) **Identity diffusion.** No commitment has been made to explore or question values. Person has no idea about occupational future, politics or religion.
- (2) **Foreclosure.** Commitments are made but without active questioning of these commitments. These commitments are usually a direct extension of the values of parents and teachers.
- (3) **Moratorium.** The individual is in the process of actively seeking information but without making a final decision. Conflicts between current experiences and past beliefs and values may arise, leading the person to read more, talk to others, or more deeply reflect on feelings. This is the period that comes closest to the notion of "identity crisis".
- (4) **Identity achievement.** The individual has experienced moratorium and is currently active in implementing a commitment. The identity crisis has been resolved and the adolescent is making relatively strong personal commitments to an occupation or an ideology.

Adolescents in the "identity foreclosure" category are more susceptible to becoming social isolates because of their resistance to reformulation and revision of personality components. Those in the identity diffusion and moratorium categories still have the chance of reaching the identity achievement category.

Burch (Feinstein 1985:148) notes that identity is established through an active and reciprocal exchange between individuals and the psychosocial matrix in which they live. The multiple exchange between adolescents and their peer group, family and others allows them to experiment with relationships and roles. Adolescents with foreclosed identity appear indifferent to the idea of new ventures. They are quite unconcerned about their social isolation and often more interested in psychological play as experienced in elaborate fantasies which may often have a decidedly grandiose quality. These fantasies become a primary source of comfort and gratification. Active interpersonal relationships with peers and others outside the family become secondary sources of



gratification. Such withdrawal into fantasy is one facet of an overall movement toward the solipsistic orientation that can be described as a psychological cocoon.

Burch notes further that despite a good superficial adaptation, adolescents with foreclosed identity reveal their developmental difficulties in a variety of emotional and behavioural contexts, such as poor self-esteem regulation, social isolation and withdrawal, poor school performance, a high degree of demandingness and manipulative behaviour, poor frustration tolerance and a generalised inability to utilize affect experiences to further the development of psychological functions.

#### **4.7.2 Rogers' theory of personality**

For a discussion of the theoretical framework and basic principles of Rogers' see section 2.6.2. With regard to Rogers' theory of personality development in relation to the adolescent, the only aspects that need further elaboration are how the adolescent's self-concept and self-esteem are modified and shaped.

##### **4.7.2.1        *The adolescent's self-concept***

Strang (Rice 1992:246) lists four basic dimensions of the type of self-concept that adolescents have.

- (1) **Overall, basic self-concept.** This is adolescents' view of their personality and "perceptions of his abilities and his status and roles in the outer world".
- (2) **Individual temporary or transitory self-concepts.** These ideas of self are influenced by the mood of the moment or by a recent or continuing experience. A critical remark from parents may produce a temporary feeling of deflated self-worth.
- (3) **Social selves.** These are the selves that adolescents think others see of them, which, in turn influences how they see themselves. If they have the impression that others think they are stupid or socially unacceptable, they tend to think of themselves in these negative ways.

- (4) **Ideal self.** This refers to the kind of people adolescents would like to be. Their aspirations may be restricted: too low or too high. Ideal selves that are too low impede accomplishment; those that are too high may lead to frustration. Realistic self-concepts lead to self-acceptance, mental health and the accomplishment of realistic goals.

The type of self-concept adolescents form, is shaped largely through interaction with others. According to Rice (1992:247), the social self especially comes from an involvement with others in intimacy, group participation, cooperation and competition. It evolves through social interaction. With regard to socially isolated adolescents, it can be assumed that they have not acquired a well-developed social self due to poor social interaction.

#### 4.7.2.2 *The adolescent's self-esteem*

People's self-concept refers to their ideas about themselves. Self-esteem refers to their feelings about and evaluations of themselves. With the onset of puberty, most young people begin to assess themselves, comparing not only their physical appearance but also their motor skills, intellectual capacities and social abilities with those of their peers (Rice 1992:247). This assessment changes the self-esteem that adolescents developed during the middle school years.

Scales (1991:8) indicates that young adolescents who are going through puberty are likely to experience a decline in their self-esteem. Also, boys and girls show marked differences in their self-esteem. Boys who mature earlier than their peers physically tend to feel good about this development and show higher self-esteem while girls who mature earlier than their peers tend to have lower self-esteem (see section 4.3). Kirshner (1994:27) is also of the opinion that the emotional, physical and social changes of early adolescence may be highly stressful, posing significant self-esteem and interpersonal problems for the psychologically vulnerable (poor sense of self) girl, who is at risk of subsequent depression, eating disorders or other behavioural problems.

Early maturation has a different effect on adolescent boys' and girls' self-esteem. According to Shaffer (1993:456), young adolescents do experience a decline in self-esteem if they are noticeably overweight or leave elementary school as the oldest and most revered pupils and enter junior high where they are the youngest and least competent. Adolescent girls who do not belong to a peer

friendship group are often burdened with feelings of low self-esteem, hopelessness and shame. They are deprived of the friendship group's protective function against depression and its supportive function in the exploration of feelings about changing sexuality, self-image and social relationships. When a girl feels insecure and unsure of her self-worth in early adolescence, the absence of a friendship group can interfere with her efforts to work out developmental issues, thereby increasing her potential risk of subsequent mental health and behavioural problems and social isolation.

With regard to changes in self-concept and self-esteem and their effects during adolescence, Rice (1992:248) concludes the following:

- (1) Individuals whose self-esteem has never sufficiently developed manifest a number of symptoms of ill health. They may display symptoms of anxiety and depression while low self-esteem in adolescent girls is associated with eating disorders like anorexia nervosa and bulimia.
- (2) Adolescents with poor self-concepts are often rejected by other people. Acceptance of and by others, especially best friends, is related to self-concept development. Adolescents with low self-esteem tend to be socially invisible. They are not noticed as leaders, do not participate in social activities and very often develop feelings of isolation and loneliness.
- (3) There is a close relationship between delinquency and self-concept. Delinquent youth tend to show lower self-esteem than do nondelinquent youth.
- (4) Younger adolescents have higher self-esteem than older ones.
- (5) During late adolescence, friends have the largest impact on the girl's self-esteem while fathers have the largest impact on boys' self-evaluation.
- (6) The affective quality of family relations during adolescence is associated with high levels of self-esteem. Parents who care and show interest are more likely to have adolescents who have higher self-esteem.

- (7) Adolescents with physical handicaps or negative body images have more difficulty developing a positive self-concept and self-esteem than others who are more average.

From the above it is clear that many factors have an effect on the type of self-concept and self-esteem adolescents develop. The most significant finding in relation to social isolation is that adolescents with lower self-concepts and self-esteem are more susceptible to rejection and social isolation. It is important to note that the primary contributor to lower self-esteem is the experience of negatively perceived problems, such as parental separation, illness, law violations, financial difficulties and failure of examinations (Youngs et al 1990:339).

#### **4.8 CONCLUSION**

This chapter analysed the physical, cognitive, affective, moral and personality development of the adolescents. The analysis revealed that there is a significant relationship between these aspects of development and social isolation.

With regard to physical development, physical attractiveness, body image and build and the rate of maturation affect acceptance and rejection by peers. Physically attractive adolescents who have favourable body images are more likely to be accepted than others who are physically unattractive and have negative body images. Late maturation is associated with greater self-doubt, anxiety and a tendency to withdraw from social situations.

Piaget's theory and the information-processing theory were used to examine the cognitive development of adolescents. Both theories show how cognitive deficits can lead to social isolation. In Piaget's theory, the inability to use formal operational thought and in the case of the information processing theory, inaccurate processing of information can lead to the display of inappropriate behaviour which, in turn, can lead to rejection by peers.

An analysis of the affective development of the adolescent reveals that adolescence can be characterised as a period of emotional upheaval. The absence of significant relationships is associated with social isolation and to some of the most common emotional problems (such as

anxiety disorders, depression and aggression) encountered by adolescents. Depression is the most important affective factor contributing to social isolation among adolescents.

In adolescents' moral development there is a shift to moral judgements becoming less egocentric. According to Piaget's theory of moral development, adolescents should have passed onto the second stage of moral development, namely morality of co-operation (or reciprocity). Piaget also stresses that adolescents' moral development progresses through reciprocal relationships with others. Socially isolated adolescent's moral development will presumably be affected because of restricted interpersonal relationships. Kohlberg postulates that adolescents should be at the conventional morality stage where societal needs and values takes precedence over individual interests. Adolescents who cannot break away from the pre-conventional type of moral thinking which is typical of the preadolescent period and engage in conventional or post-conventional moral thinking may respond inappropriately to moral issues, thereby becoming vulnerable to rejection and social isolation.

Adolescents' personality development was analysed in terms of Erikson and Rogers' theories. According to Erikson's theory, the crisis in the personality development of the adolescent is to resolve the conflict between identity and identity confusion in order to become a unique adult with a definite role in life. Erikson stresses that people acquire an identity by getting information about role expectations during social interactions. With regard to socially isolated adolescents, their attainment of this identity will be hampered because of the lack of social interaction. Rogers stresses the type of self-concept and self-esteem adolescents develop during social interactions with others. Clearly, the social self of socially isolated adolescents is restricted once again through the lack of social interaction. Adolescents with lower self-concepts and self-esteem are more susceptible to rejection and social isolation.

Analysis of the various aspects of development make it clear that adolescence is a very difficult period. Adolescents face one of the most challenging periods in their lives where they have to succumb and adapt to the many changes taking place within themselves both physically and psychologically.

## CHAPTER 5

### The social development of the adolescent

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the social development of the adolescent. Some of the important concepts, definitions and principles (such as the definition of the concept *social development*, analysis of the phenomenon of socialisation, and the aims of the socialisation process) have been covered in chapter 3 (sections 3.1 and 3.2), which deals with the social development of the primary school child. As these concepts and phenomena are the same for all age groups, they will not be repeated here. With regard to the social development of the adolescent, only Erikson and Sullivan's theories will be discussed because very few theories deal extensively with adolescent social development. Furman (1993:90) stresses that the few theories that deal with adolescent friendships and social development are not extensive enough to form the basis for empirical work. Since both Erikson and Sullivan's theories are covered in detail in sections 3.4.3, 3.4.5 and 4.7.1, only their implications in relation to social isolation among adolescents will be discussed.

This chapter will focus mainly on the importance of peers in the social development of the adolescent since it is during this period of social development that the peer group plays a very significant role. Other important aspects that will be examined include the social characteristics of the adolescent, friendship formation, the value of friendships in the social adaptation of adolescents, acceptance and rejection by the peer group and finally the family as a socialisation agent.

As in the social development of primary school children, the factors that contribute to the social isolation of adolescents will be highlighted.

## 5.2 THEORIES OF ADOLESCENT SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### 5.2.1 Erikson's psychosocial theory

According to Erikson's theory (see sections 2.6.1 and 4.7.1), the crisis in the fifth stage, which occurs during adolescence, is between identity and identity diffusion. The positive outcome of this crisis is the discovery and establishment of an identity.

Selzer (1982:24) clearly highlights the meaning Erikson assigns to the concept "identity". According to Selzer, Erikson describes identity as the attainment of a holistic connection between what the person once was, what that person is now, and what he wishes to become. Also, Erikson's psychosocial model places the process of identity formation in the unconscious structure of the individual but emphasises that its resolution is rooted in and dependent on the society of immediate people and accepted values. Erikson argues further (Selzer 1982:25) that adolescents' psychological needs demand close peer association in order to work through the conflicts of this stage. From this, it becomes evident that socially isolated adolescents may experience extreme difficulty in resolving their identity crisis because of the absence of friends.

According to Erikson's theory (Balk 1995:132), two pitfalls face adolescents in the crisis over identity. First, by selecting a type of identity too quickly, adolescents may settle on a path approved by others rather than one that they had personally chosen. Erikson calls this pitfall **identity foreclosure**, which is a premature resolution to the crisis between identity and identity diffusion.

The second pitfall is that adolescents may avoid making decisions and may drift without lasting commitments to anyone or to any values. Erikson calls this pitfall **identity confusion**. Adolescents experiencing identity confusion are self-centred and emotionally immature, and lack any roots of friendship.

Erikson also maintains that an adolescent's journey to identity must include a **psychological moratorium**, that is, an extended time allowing the adolescent to experiment with possible roles without the pressure to fulfil excessive obligations.

On the positive side, an adolescent whose journey towards identity results in a clear sense of self will attain an **achieved identity**. Such adolescents are confident about their values, live independently, are autonomous, and form intimate relations with others.

Erikson highlights the importance of the peer group in an adolescent's social development, maintaining that the peer group is formed of necessity (Selzer 1982:42). The peer group is charged with providing a substitute structure in which important needs can be played out, identity formation can begin to take place and the change of role diffusion can be avoided. Also, emotional support can be elicited from peers since a peer who stands in for the parent is in many ways asked to provide substitute functions while adolescents integrate newly experienced changes and struggle with apparent or real loss of identity. According to Erikson, defining one's identity is facilitated by projecting one's own diffused ego image onto another peer and seeing it reflected and gradually clarified (Selzer 1982:43).

With regard to social isolates, identity formation will presumably be restricted and this restriction may further have negative consequences on personality and social development. Pettit (1992:8) emphasises that social experiences, particularly with peers, enable adolescents to compare and view themselves with others. This comparison facilitates the development of the social self component of adolescents' personal identity.

Erikson points out that establishing a sense of "**who you really are**" is the major psychological task of adolescence, and that a young person can successfully resolve it only if the earlier crises involving trust, autonomy, initiative and industry were positively resolved as well. Without a healthy sense of trust, autonomy, initiative, and industry, it is difficult to establish a coherent sense of identity. Also the phase following identity is intimacy. Without a well formed identity, healthy intimate relationships cannot develop and this could lead to social isolation.

Erikson contends further that the key to resolving the identity crisis lies in the adolescent's interaction with others. When people who matter react positively to young people's aspirations, he or she has an easier time making the choices involved. For instance, if the young man interested in environmental issues is encouraged by parents and teachers and has the approval of peers, he is apt to integrate this new dimension quite smoothly into his developing sense of self.



In the case of socially isolated adolescents this may not be possible because of the lack of interaction with others.

### 5.2.2 Sullivan's theory of adolescent social development

Sullivan proposes a stage theory in which the quality of interpersonal relationships, particularly with family members and peers, is critical in the development of personality and interpersonal style (Pettit 1992:9). He views maturational-biological forces as providing a substrate from which personality and social styles emerge but argues that interpersonal experience accounts for variations in these styles. Just as in Erikson's theory, the importance of peers appears to be critical in an adolescent's social development.

As mentioned in chapter 3 (section 3.4.5), Sullivan identifies seven developmental stages (viz, infancy, childhood, the juvenile era, pre-adolescence, early adolescence, adolescence and adulthood) that are important in people's social development. For Sullivan, each developmental stage is marked by efforts to reduce anxiety arising from real or imagined threats to one's security. Interpersonal relationships provide a context for the relief of tensions associated with this anxiety. Individuals naturally seek out these relations, which provide the impetus for developmental change.

Sullivan sees the need for a close interpersonal relationship emerging in late childhood. This need cannot be fully met by parents because of inequities in power, authority and nurturing in the parent-child relationship. Thus, children turn to peer relationships, which are more symmetrical and reciprocal to fulfil their intimacy needs. These intimate relationships with peers eventuate from the same sex "chumships" in late childhood to the heterosexual longing during puberty, to the more mature and respectful relationships with the opposite sex in late adolescence. These intimate relations then make possible the discovery of the "self" because it is through intimate interactions with others that people acquire an image of oneself as a worthy "good me" or an unworthy "bad me" of intimacy (Pettit 1992:11). This is similar to Erikson's theory, which also stresses the underlying relationship between self (identity) and intimacy. This "bad me"/"good me" personification of adolescents is also similar to that of primary school children (see section 3.4.5). According to Pettit (1992:12) it is important to keep in mind that personification relationships

emerge in response to social experiences and such personifications serve to guide perceptions of "self" in later life, for example, through the process of stereotyping.

According to Sullivan's theory of social development, difficulties experienced in forming interpersonal relationships with peers can lead to the personification of a "bad me" in terms of friendship. Sullivan also highlights the importance of peers in the social development of adolescents. Hence, without the necessary interpersonal experiences, the developmental changes of social isolates may be restricted and this could result in social deficits and interpersonal ineptness.

### **5.3 SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ADOLESCENT**

Bijstra et al (1994:767) recognize the period of adolescence as an important time for the learning, development and maintenance of social skills. During this stage, adolescents are exposed to a range of new social situations and roles which they have not encountered as a child. Moreover, they increasingly have to deal with these new situations and roles without the supervision of their parents. Since they are now expected to take responsibility for their own social lives, it becomes imperative for them to acquire adequate social skills.

Bukowski et al (1993:23) maintain that early adolescence is one of the most challenging developmental periods of a person's life span. During this time, the nature of interpersonal relationships changes as youngsters begin to function in a vast array of new environments. The establishment of healthy relations with peers becomes increasingly important as part of these changes.

According to Rice (1992:427), the following are important developmental needs related to the social development of the adolescent :

- (1) The need to establish caring, meaningful and satisfying relationships with individuals.
- (2) The need to broaden childhood friendships by getting acquainted with new people of different backgrounds, experiences and ideas.

- (3) The need to find acceptance, belonging, recognition and status in social groups.
- (4) The need to pass from the homosocial interests and playmates of middle childhood to heterosocial concerns and friendships.
- (5) The need to learn about, adopt and practise dating patterns and skills that contribute to personal and social development, intelligent mate selection and successful marriage.

Failure to realise any of these needs through developmental restraints, then, can seriously affect adolescents' social development and hence lead to social isolation.

The factors that govern adolescent interaction are different from those of middle childhood (Keller and Wood 1989:820). Younger children tend to focus more on concrete aspects of interaction (eg, sharing material things) whereas adolescents, without rejecting the relevance of concrete aspects of interaction, emphasise the importance of more abstract dimensions, such as intimacy, trust and faithfulness. They show greater awareness of the psychological aspects of friendships, of friends' personalities, and of the rules of reciprocity that govern interaction.

An analysis of the literature dealing with adolescents' social development reveals that peers play a crucial and critical role in the social development of most adolescents. Adolescents are also more dependent on peer relations than younger children because their ties with parents become looser as they gain greater independence (Conger 1991:280). Buescher (1985:13) stresses that the peer group and not the family is pivotal for decision making and support in the day-to-day life of adolescents. Adolescents' need to belong to a particular group that they see as necessary and desirable can outweigh most previous expectations about achievement, independence and self-determination fostered by the family.

Peer relations during early adolescence play an important, if not essential role in the development of several aspects of competence and well-being. Relations with peers provide experiences that cannot be found in relations with parents. Specifically, whereas parent-child relationships are defined by a hierarchy of social "unequals", peer relationships consist of interaction among "equals". These relationships give early adolescents important opportunities to experience acceptance and closeness. These peer and friendship relations in early adolescence constitute a

person's first true interpersonal relationship and make a profound contribution to an early adolescent's sense of well-being (Bukowski et al 1993:24).

Gavin and Furman (1989:827) agree and maintain that adolescence is a period in which individuals are expanding their perspective beyond the family and learning how to negotiate relationships with others in the social system. Peers, particularly group members, become important social referents. The peer group can also serve as a bridge from parental dependencies to a sense of autonomy and connectedness with the greater social network. Not being connected to the peer group, as in the case of social isolates, may leave adolescents without an important source of support during a period of physical, emotional and social upheaval.

Another important social characteristic of adolescence is that of conformity. The pressure to conform is so intense that in some cases adolescents may go to the extent of sacrificing their own better judgements and commit delinquent acts just to be accepted by the peer group.

Mussen et al (1990:602) concur that due to the heightened importance of the peer group during adolescence, the motivation to conform to the values, customs and fads of the peer culture increases tremendously. However, the need to conform to peers may vary according to certain factors. For example, adolescents with low status among their peers and with a low self-esteem are more conforming than those with higher status and self-esteem.

Mussen states further that best friends are chosen partly on the basis of homogeneity (the choice of someone like oneself). Similarly, cliques and groups among adolescents operate in the same way. Each group takes on a personality of its own: members are characterised according to dress and appearance, scholastic standing, extra-curricular participation, social skills, socioeconomic status, reputation and personality qualifications. One way individuals have of being part of a particular group is to be like other members of the group.

Mussen's findings reveal that failure to conform to the demands of the peer group could lead to rejection.

#### 5.4 THE VALUE OF FRIENDSHIPS IN THE SOCIAL ADAPTATION OF ADOLESCENTS

Hartup (1993:11) and others argue that "having friends" amounts to the following developmental imperative:

- Good developmental outcomes depend on having friends and keeping them.
- Friendships furnish the individual with socialisation opportunities not easily obtained elsewhere.
- These relationships are important in emotion regulation, self-understanding, and the formation and functioning of subsequent relationships.

Seiffge-Krenke (1993:73) concurs, asserting that for many adolescents, relations with friends are critical interpersonal bridges to psychological growth and social maturity. They offer consensual validation of interests, hopes and fears; bolster feelings of self-worth and provide affection and opportunities for intimate disclosure.

From Hartup and Seiffge-Krenke's views it is evident that having friends influences adolescents' social and emotional development. As for the socially isolated adolescents, not having friends will result in both social and emotional developmental restraints.

Hartup (1993:12) concludes that adolescents with stable friendships have a stronger self-esteem and are more altruistic than those without friends. By contrast, friendless adolescents report loneliness and depression. Fogel and Melson (1988:519) contend that this loneliness deprives socially isolated adolescents of a sense of belonging, closes off participation in social activities and makes the individual feel in limbo, which leads to boredom and other negative emotions.

Claes (1994:181) points out that interaction with peers contributes substantially to the development of social competencies in the individual. Adolescents who have fewer opportunities for positive interaction with their peers will be deprived of the opportunity to develop adequate social behaviour and cognition. These individuals' learning of adaptive strategies is therefore hindered by this exclusion from normal socialisation experiences. Furthermore, they are more

vulnerable in that they might adopt deviant means of coping and thereby be at risk of developing psychopathic problems. The converse could also be true, where disorders that emerge during adolescence could also influence interpersonal relations and these disorders may be experiences of deeper psychological problems.

Rice (1992:429) contends that one of the reasons friendships are crucial during adolescence is that adolescents are insecure and anxious about themselves. They lack personality definition and secure identities. Consequently, they gather friends around them from whom they gain strength and who help to establish boundaries. From them they learn the necessary personal and social skills and societal definitions that help them to become part of the larger world. They become emotionally sound through others who share their vulnerability. An unpopular adolescent on the other hand is likely to be caught in a vicious cycle (Conger 1991:301). Being emotionally troubled, self-preoccupied and insecure, they are likely to meet with rejection or indifference from peers. The awareness of rejection by their peers and the lack of opportunities to participate in and learn from peer group activities, in turn, further undermine these adolescents' self-confidence and increase their sense of social isolation, leading to further inappropriate behaviour with peers.

Evans and Elder (1993:165) concur and maintain that being rejected by others greatly reduces the isolates' opportunity for peer contact and since social norm formation is learned in intimate peer groups, the isolates' chances to receive useful feedback and to correct communication errors are greatly diminished. Therefore, they tend not to learn appropriate strategies that could reconnect them socially to their peers. Their inability to adapt to appearance, intellectual and gender norms serves to perpetuate their social isolation.

According to Buhrmester (1990:1102), there are several reasons for the importance of friendship intimacy to socioemotional functioning in adolescence, namely

- Not having intimate friends may be a significant source of stress. The need for friendship intimacy increases during early adolescence, and if left unsatisfied through absence of friendship, leads to heightened feelings of loneliness, alienation and depression.

- Adolescents appear to have an increased desire for self-disclosure and self-exploration rooted in a need for "consensual validation" of personal worth. Youth who do not have intimate friendships may miss out on important validating interactions, which could leave them feeling less secure more anxious and less worthy.
- Youth who lack intimate friendships may be deprived of important sources of social support and coping assistance. The support of intimate friends may be particularly important during adolescence as the young person confronts a variety of uniquely adolescent stressors (eg. bodily changes, sexuality, dating and strained family relationships), many of which cannot comfortably be discussed with parents.

## 5.5 THE FRIENDSHIP FORMATION OF ADOLESCENTS

According to Hartup (1993:3), there are three main friendship patterns that form : **best friends**, **cliques** and **crowds**.

- (1) **Best friends.** Most adolescents have one or two best friends. These friendships usually come about through mutual attraction and contact which usually occurs on a daily basis. Behaviour with best friends consists of "socialising", that is, talking on the telephone, hanging out together and having fun.
- (2) **Cliques.** Fogel and Melson (1988:517) describe cliques as smaller groups than crowds. They involve intimate relationships in which friends go places and do things together. They tend to be closed to outsiders. Cliques are unisexual during early adolescence and may become heterosexual during middle and late adolescence. According to Fogel, research shows that cliques usually have less than six members, who tend to be from the same social and economic background, are in the same grade (class), and have the same values and tastes, thus enhancing the sense of being different from others. Cliques are also believed to enhance the formation of group identity, since the members are similar to each other and different from non-clique members. The clique's intimacy and mutuality may function as a kind of surrogate family in the promotion of self-esteem and identity formation.

- (3) **Crowds.** Crowds tend to be associations of cliques and are usually concerned with organised social activities, such as parties, dances and sporting events. They facilitate heterosexual relationships by bringing together cliques of different sexes in the context of social activities.

The absence of common characteristics which each group, especially the clique, requires, means that socially isolated adolescents are not accepted into any of the above categories.

Hartup (1993:6) stresses that there are certain conditions necessary for friendships to last. Friendships are based on reciprocity and commitment between individuals who see themselves more or less as equals. In this context, **reciprocity** implies mutuality in orientations and feelings. Being friends also implies a special sensitivity and responsibility for one another so, in this sense, friendship is **committed**. Friends also interact on an equal power base, thus friendships are **egalitarian** relationships. These three friendship conditions - reciprocity, commitment and egalitarianism - are first fully understood and appreciated during adolescent years.

DuBois and Hirsch (1993:102) studied school/non-school friendship patterns in early adolescence and found that engagement in activities with the best school friend was more frequent during school hours than outside school and that environmental obstacles (such as difficulties associated with home and parents as well as competing social activities) interfered to a greater extent with seeing school friends outside school than did problems related to social skills. This finding suggests that environmental factors have an important role in affecting levels of friendship involvement outside school. Engagement in activities with the best friend during and outside school is also related to self-esteem among boys but not among girls. This finding suggests that a variety of settings during early adolescence may facilitate psychological adjustment among boys more so than among girls.

## 5.6 STAGES OF FRIENDSHIP DEVELOPMENT

According to Rice (1992:430), early friendships begin because of the need for companionship. This need for companionship causes young adolescents to pair off, to choose a best friend or two,



almost always of the same sex. Adolescents will spend long hours conversing with these friends on the telephone, attend school, club and athletic events with them and will strive to dress alike, look alike and act alike. Usually the best friends are from similar socio-economic, racial and home backgrounds, from the same neighbourhood and school, of the same age, and have numerous interests and values in common. Best friends usually get along well if they are well selected because they are similar and thus compatible. If best friends meet each other's needs, the bonds of friendship may be drawn tightly.

Early friendships can also be intense, emotional and sometimes stormy if certain needs are not met. Adolescents may have made a bad choice and instead of their best friends meeting their needs, they stimulate frustration and anger. Once thwarted, immature, rejected and unstable adolescents react with excessive emotion, which may disrupt their friendships permanently and thus lead to social isolation.

Early friendships begin to broaden when adolescents enter high school where they are immediately exposed to much broader and more heterogeneous friendships. They now have an opportunity to meet youth from other neighbourhoods and social classes and different ethnic and national origins. These youth may act, dress, speak and think differently from those they have known before. One social task at this stage of development is to broaden their acquaintances, to learn how to relate to and get along with many different types of people. Inability on the part of an adolescent to learn to relate to others may result in rejection.

Conger (1991:290) cites five distinct stages of peer group development:

- (1) **Same-sex groups.** As a young person enters adolescence, same-sex cliques or "gangs" of preadolescents predominate.
- (2) **Adolescent crowd.** Gradually single-sex cliques begin to interact with cliques of the opposite sex, leading to the formation of the adolescent crowd. At least initially, such heterosexual interactions are tentative and are usually undertaken in the group setting, where the individuals are supported by the presence of their same-sex friends.

- (3) **Heterosexual cliques.** The formation of genuinely heterosexual cliques, in which heterosexual interactions between individuals begin, is usually started by higher- status clique leaders. However, adolescents who belong to these emerging heterosexual groups maintain their membership in the same-sex clique, in other words, they possess dual membership in two intersecting cliques.
- (4) **Fully developed adolescent crowd.** This is made up of a number of heterosexual cliques in close association.
- (5) **Loosely associated groups of couples.** Here adolescent couples and loosely associated groups of couples are frequently seen. Same-sex friendships continue, however, but become less intense. The importance of the crowd begins to diminish as the need for conformity to peers lessens and the perceived need to establish an individual identity grows.

It is important to note that some individuals either by choice or as a result of rejection by peers, belong neither to cliques nor to crowds. According to Conger (1991:292), many adolescents, who are preoccupied with themselves, uncertain of their own worth and eager to gain security and status through acceptance by the "in-group", can be remarkably indifferent or even cruel to those who do not fit it. This can make the adolescent years for many isolated young people lonely and difficult.

## **5.7 FACTORS AFFECTING ACCEPTANCE AND REJECTION INTO THE PEER GROUP**

Rice (1992:455) is of the opinion that one of the greatest problems of adolescence is loneliness. They may be lonely because of a poor self-image, emotional disturbance, depression or cynicism about other people or other situations.

Five characteristics ( viz, name, physical appearance, self-esteem, social skills and perceptions about the person's academic intelligence) are associated with peer acceptance and rejection (Balk 1995:283). Balk (1995:285) summarises these characteristics as follows:

- It is an advantage to be **physically attractive**.
- Having an **ordinary name** rather than an odd name, increases the likelihood of being accepted.
- Popular individuals have mastered **socially accepted behaviours** and are skilled at identifying when these behaviours are appropriate.
- **Academic achievement** contributes to social status.

Conger (1991:300) concludes that an adolescents' personality characteristics, cognitive skill and social behaviour affect their chances of being accepted by peers. In general, adolescents who are accepted by their peers are perceived as liking other people and as being tolerant, flexible and sympathetic. They are seen as lively, cheerful, good-natured, having a sense of humour, low in anxiety, having a reasonable level of self-esteem, acting naturally and self-confidently without being conceited, possessing initiative, enthusiasm and drive. Adolescents who are viewed favourably tend to promote constructive interaction between peers and enjoy group activities.

From the foregoing it is evident that the characteristics that are least admired and most likely to lead to neglect or outright rejection are in many ways the opposite of those leading to acceptance and popularity. Adolescents lacking in self-confidence and who tend to react to discomfiture with timidity, nervousness or withdrawal are likely to be neglected by peers and to become social isolates.

Also, adolescents who are self-centred and inconsiderate and who react to discomfiture with over aggressiveness, conceit or demand for attention are likely to invoke active dislike and rejection.

Four main factors influence acceptance within the adolescent peer group (Rice 1992:434), namely

- (1) **Personality and social skills.** Personal qualities (such as being kind, sympathetic, cooperative, cheerful, honest, self-confident and intelligent) and social skills (such as having good manners, being courteous, poised, tactful and a conversationalist) are the most important factors influencing group acceptance.
- (2) **Achievement.** Achievement factors include academic qualities and athletic prowess.
- (3) **Physical characteristics.** These include physical appearance and body image.
- (4) **Shyness.** Shyness in social situations has been referred to as **social-evaluative anxiety**. It stems from a fear of negative evaluation of the self by others, a desire for social approval, low self-esteem and a fear of rejection. Shy adolescents tend to become social isolates.

Chapter 4 covered other factors that may affect an adolescent's chances of being accepted or rejected by peers. Briefly, these factors include intelligence and ability, physical attractiveness and body image, athletic ability, rate of maturation, type of self-esteem and emotional problems, especially depression and anxiety. To avoid duplication these factors will not be discussed further.

According Lawrence and Bennet (1992:257), shy individuals report experiencing several types of interpersonal problems. Most of them experience problems meeting people, making new friends and engaging in new and different experiences. From these situations stem negative affective states, like anxiety, depression, loneliness, a lack of assertiveness and difficulty in expressing opinions. Hence adolescents who are shy are at risk of becoming social isolates.

Fogel and Nelson (1988:518) make an important distinction between **loneliness** and **alienation**. According to him, loneliness in adolescence is associated with depression, self-consciousness, feelings of inferiority, anxiety about social encounters, unwillingness to take social risks and self-reported low physical attractiveness. Alienation, on the other hand, occurs when individuals

actively reject the values of the school and peer group, which results in adolescents becoming indifferent and alone.

Rice (1992:429) lists some of the main reasons for adolescent social isolation:

- (1) Some have a poor self-image and feel very vulnerable to criticism. They anticipate rejection and avoid actions that might cause them embarrassment. They therefore actively avoid forming social relationships with others.
- (2) Depressed and emotionally disturbed adolescents have difficulty establishing close relationships.
- (3) Some adolescents are conditioned to mistrust all people and are therefore cynical about relating to them. They avoid social contact and intimacy so others can't take advantage of them.
- (4) Some feel a lack of support from parents (such as encouragement to join peers in the neighbourhood), which makes it harder to make friends.
- (5) Whenever adolescents perceive the social risks of forming relationships to be greater than the potential benefits, they have difficulty establishing meaningful relationships.

According to Buhrmester (1990:1108), adolescents with many problems may overburden friends with unpleasant disclosures or be less able to decentre and provide support effectively to friends. For these reasons they may be neglected or rejected, which could lead to social isolation.

Conduct-disordered and anxious-withdrawn adolescents are at high risk of becoming social isolates (Panella and Henggeler 1989:9). Peer interactions of conduct-disordered and anxious-withdrawn adolescents were found to evidence less social competence and less positive affect than those of well-adjusted teenagers. Conduct-disordered teenagers were deficient in their ability to engage in subtle, responsive and reciprocal interplay that reflects the use of good social skills. They had difficulty exchanging the sensitive responsive and positive behaviours that characterise

friendship relations. The anxious-withdrawn adolescents also lacked social competence and evidenced less positive affect than the well-adjusted group. They seemed to appear relatively unhappy and anxious.

## 5.8 THE FAMILY AS AN AGENT OF ADOLESCENT SOCIALISATION

Variations in parental behaviour have a marked effect on adolescents' socialisation process (Conger 1991:599). Democratic and authoritative parents, who value both autonomous will and disciplined behaviour and encourage verbal give-and-take, are most likely to foster the development of confidence and self-esteem, responsibility, social competence, autonomy and independence among adolescents. They show by example that autonomy is possible within the framework of a democratic order.

Adolescents with autocratic and authoritarian parents are less likely to be self-reliant and able to think and act for themselves, probably because they are not given enough opportunities to test their own ideas or take independent responsibility; also because their opinions are usually not viewed as worthy of consideration. They are also likely to be less self-confident, less independent, less creative, less intellectually curious, less mature in their moral development and less flexible in approaching intellectual, academic and practical everyday problems than adolescents with authoritative and democratic parents.

*Laissez-Faire* parents, who are permissive or neglecting, or who assume a false and exaggerated egalitarianism, also do not provide the kind of support that adolescents need. Neglecting parents let adolescents "do their own thing" either because they are not involved or do not care. Such parents allow their children to drift without offering them dependable models of responsible adult behaviour.

Conger's findings are supported by Steinberg et al (1991:502), who note that teenagers of authoritative parents tend to be confident, flexible, creative, curious, and socially skilled. Those with authoritarian parents are more dependent, passive and less socially adept. *Laissez-Faire* or

permissive parents seem to produce adolescents who are immature, irresponsible and overly conforming. These youngsters are less able than their peers to assume leadership roles.

After a review of research findings, Rice (1992:107) concludes that the frequency and intensity of family conflict, including both marital and parent-adolescent conflict, affects family cohesion and this has an effect on adolescent social development. Adolescents in families with high levels of conflict are more likely to evidence antisocial behaviour, immaturity and low self-esteem than those in families with low levels of conflict. Rice further stresses that divorced and broken families also have adolescents with lower self-esteem and self-concepts and are not very successful in developing relations with other individuals. These adolescents are at great risk of being rejected and neglected and, in most instances, end up as social isolates.

In a study Anderson et al (1987:133) found that too much parental intrusion during childhood can lead to narcissistic difficulties and loneliness during adolescence. Parental overprotectiveness hinders the child's socialisation process to the extent that the child experiences difficulties in becoming differentiated from one or both parents and developing a self-identity as an independent and autonomous person. This may lead to difficulties in forming mature socioemotional bonds with others as independent and autonomous individuals during adolescence. Similar findings are documented by Mann et al (1989:274), who maintain that families characterised by conflict and low cohesion restrict adolescents from participating in family decisions where they could have possibly learnt about factors other family members take into account when making decisions. Thus, breakdown in family structure and functioning probably inhibits the development of adolescents' competence in decision making, which is an important factor affecting the development of autonomy and independence, two crucial factors that influence social competence.

## 5.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter analysed the social development of adolescents with special focus on the possible factors affecting social isolation among adolescents. Erikson's and Sullivan's social developmental theories were used as a theoretical framework against which certain important concepts in relation to an adolescent's social development were examined. From both these theories it becomes clear that the peer group plays the most significant role in an adolescent's social development. According to Erikson an adolescent without interpersonal relationships would not attain an "achieved identity" but rather a "diffused" one. Similarly, according to Sullivan, in the absence of interpersonal relationships, a personification of a "bad me" in terms of friendship could result.

With regard to the social characteristics of the adolescent, it is evident that the pressure to conform to the demands of peers becomes paramount. Adolescents even go to the extent of forsaking their own beliefs and values and adopt those of the peer group so as to gain acceptance.

The value of friendship in the social adaptation of adolescents is also highlighted. A significant factor here is that social norm formation is learned in intimate peer groups. In the absence of friendships, the chances for socially isolated adolescents to receive useful feedback and to correct communication errors are greatly diminished. Therefore, they tend not to learn appropriate strategies that could reconnect them socially to their peers.

Friendship formation among adolescents assumes basically three forms: best friends, cliques and crowds. Best friends are the smallest group, consisting of two to three close friends, followed by cliques, which involve groups of best friends. The largest friendship group is the crowd, which involves the association of cliques with similar interests. Social isolates do not fit into any of the above groups since they lack common characteristics which each group requires.

The factors that affect the acceptance and rejection of adolescents into the peer group were also identified. According to Conger (1991:300), these factors can be of a personality, cognitive or social nature. In general, the most salient factors affecting acceptance into the peer group are:



- **personality and social skills** (such as being kind, co-operative, cheerful, honest, self-confident, intelligent, courteous , poised, tactful, a conversationalist and having good manners);
- **achievement** (including outstanding academic and athletic abilities) and
- **physical characteristics** (good physical appearance and body image).

The factors that affect rejection by the peer group include poor self-image, shyness, social anxiety, low self-esteem, poor social self-concept, low intellectual ability, depression, lack of assertiveness, physical unattractiveness, being self-centred, inconsiderate, over-aggressive and conceited.

The type of parental behaviour (eg, democratic and authoritative, autocratic and authoritarian, laissez-faire) and parental style (eg, single parent families and divorced parents) also affect the social development of adolescents.

Chapter 6 will deal with the research design and procedure followed to identify the factors that influence social isolation among school children.

## **The empirical investigation: planning, execution and measurement**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

The following chapter looks at the research design used to investigate social isolation amongst pupils and its relationship to other variables (such as social competence, self-esteem, psychological well-being, academic achievement, language, grade, gender, birth order status, moral values, physical disability, sports participation, self-perceived physical attractiveness, self-perceived physical ability, marital status, family supervision, family acceptance, family autonomy granting and family conflict).

Certain hypotheses with reference to these variables and social isolation will be formulated. A brief discussion of the procedures used to test these hypotheses will also be given. This includes the selection of the sample, a description of the measuring instruments used and the procedure used to administer of the questionnaire.

### **6.2 HYPOTHESES**

The following hypotheses based on the literature study were formulated.

#### **6.2.1 Hypothesis 1**

***THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT NEGATIVE CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND SOCIAL COMPETENCE.***

#### *Rational*

From the literature study, it was found that social competence and social skills relate negatively to social isolation in both primary school children and adolescents. The higher the social competence of children, the less isolated they seems to be. According to Newcomb and Brady (in Panella and Henggeler 1986:10), adolescents who have low social competence and low positive

affect may be forming either unhealthy friendships or no friendships (high isolation). Similarly, Papalia and Olds (1993:453) also stress that the lack of social competence among primary school children could lead to social isolation. Studies by Sears et al (1991:292) , Wentzel et al (1993:819) and Balk (1995:283) also conclude that the level of social competence is a key factor contributing to social isolation. Thus, from the foregoing research evidence, one can conclude that a relationship exists between social isolation and social competence.

### **6.2.2 Hypothesis 2**

***THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT NEGATIVE CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND THE LEVEL OF PUPILS' SELF-ESTEEM.***

#### *Rational*

There is much research evidence (refer paragraphs 2.6.2.1; 3.4.2 and 4.7.2.2) that clearly highlights the relationship of a person's self-esteem to social isolation. Studies by Berns (1985:415), Sears et al (1991:292), Page (1992:150) and Hartup (1993:12) show that children with stronger self-esteem have stable friendships and are less likely to become social isolates. The relationship between self-esteem and social isolation has been extensively researched and throughout the literature study it has become clearly evident that the type of self-esteem one has, definitely plays an important role in determining whether the person could become socially isolated or not.

### **6.2.3 Hypothesis 3**

***THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT NEGATIVE CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND PUPILS' PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING.***

#### *Rational*

From the literature study, it becomes evident that the main indicators of a poor psychological well-being is the high levels of anxiety and depression a person suffers from.

Studies done by Panella and Henggeler (1989:9), Fogel and Melson (1988:518) and Inderbitzen-Pisaruk et al (1992:151) show that the level of anxiety has a significant effect on social isolation. Panella and Henggeler (1989:9) found that anxious-withdrawn adolescents lacked social competence and evidenced less positive affect than the well-adjusted group. Both Samter (1992:213) and Sears et al (1991:292) also found loneliness to be associated with anxiety. It is also important to note here that anxiety can be a cause or effect of loneliness, namely, being anxious, could contribute to being withdrawn and lonely, while on the other hand, being lonely and isolated could give rise to anxiousness.

Studies done by Kovacs and Goldston (1991:388), Lerner et al (1988:357) and Maag and Forness (1991:6) show that there is a relationship between depression and social isolation. These researchers concluded that there was convincing evidence that school aged children suffer from depression disorders that disrupt the child's behavioural, cognitive, social and affective functioning. Sears et al (1991:292) also concluded that loneliness is associated with depression and that depression could be both a cause and consequence of loneliness. For example, depressed children may be less willing to form friendships and thereby increase their loneliness. On the other hand, the experience of being lonely for a long time, may lead children to see themselves as social failures and that might give rise to depression. Recent findings by Rice (1992:429) and Koenig (1994:27) also strongly concur that depression and loneliness are highly correlated.

#### **6.2.4 Hypothesis 4**

***THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT NEGATIVE CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT.***

##### *Rational*

From the literature study it was found that low academic achievement was associated with social isolation (Byrnes 1984:374 and Evans and Eder 1993:141). Byrnes further concluded that children with low social status had poor academic performance.

Studies by Rice (1992:43) and Balk (1995:285) also indicated that the level of a person's academic achievement affected his or her acceptance and rejection into the group.

### 6.2.5 Hypothesis 5

***THERE ARE SIGNIFICANT CORRELATIONS BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND MORALITY AS EXPRESSED IN VALUES SUCH AS HONESTY, OBEDIENCE, RESPONSIBILITY, HELPFULNESS, HAPPINESS, LOVE, PEACE, SELF-RESPECT, FORGIVENESS, SELF-CONTROL, FREEDOM, PERSEVERANCE, POPULARITY, FRIENDSHIP, AMBITION, KNOWLEDGE, INDEPENDENCE, COMPETENCE, BRAVERY AND SECURITY.***

#### *Rational*

The literature study has revealed a relationship between moral development and social isolation (refer paragraphs 2.5.2 and 4.6.1). Rubenstein (1987:183) stressed that, according to the second stage of Piaget's theory of moral development, there is a need for children to work together in order to make rules and arbitrate among themselves. In the case of the socially isolated children, they may experience restraints in their moral development because of their poor peer interaction. Similar findings are also reported by Rice (1992:668) where he found that, within any age group, individuals are at different levels of development in their moral thinking: some are retarded, while others are advanced. However, children with extensive peer group participation advance considerably more quickly through the successive stages of development in moral thinking than those with lower peer group participation.

### 6.2.6 Hypothesis 6

***THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT NEGATIVE CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND PERCEIVED PHYSICAL ABILITY.***

#### *Rational*

According to Rice (1992:192), children who mature earlier, enjoy considerably more social advantages than late maturers. Their superior build and athletic skills enhance their social prestige and position. Their perception of being physically superior enables them to participate more frequently in extra-curricular activities than late maturers who usually develop negative self-perceptions and self-concepts.

Evans and Eder (1993:148), also found that being obese can have a damaging effect on the child psychologically. They are more likely to have negative body images and negative perceptions of their physical ability which affects their social development.

From the available research evidence, it can be assumed that children who have higher perceptions of their physical ability are less likely to be socially isolated since they are able to participate more frequently in extra-curricular activities and sports.

#### **6.2.7 Hypothesis 7**

***THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT NEGATIVE CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND SELF PERCEIVED PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS.***

##### *Rational*

The literature study has revealed that being physically attractive is more advantageous than being unattractive. Physically attractive children are more readily accepted into the group than those who are not physically attractive (refer paragraph 2.2.2). Evans and Eder (1993:166) found that one of the main areas in which negative valuations were made by pupils who rejected their peers was clustered around appearance. Thornton and Ryckman (1991:85) also found that children who are popular with their peers are generally physically more attractive. Further studies by Lerner et al (1991:300), Page (1992:150), Lau (1990:113) and Rubin et al (1993:53) indicate that there is a positive relationship between physical unattractiveness and sociometric status. It was found that the more attractive children are, the more popular they were. Those children whose physical appearance was not within the socially acceptable range, were most often isolated by their peer group. From the available research evidence one can conclude that there is a relationship between physical attractiveness and social isolation.

#### **6.2.8 Hypothesis 8**

***THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN SOCIAL ISOLATION BETWEEN PUPILS WHO ARE PHYSICALLY DISABLED AND THOSE WHO ARE NOT.***

### *Rational*

According to the literature study, children who suffer from physical disabilities are often rejected and neglected (Hendrick 1988:126) and (Page 1992:150). According to Hurlock (1980:186), poor health or physical defects that cut children off from play with their peers make them feel inferior and martyred. Both Evans and Elder (1993:148) and Rubin (1993:531) also found a positive relationship to exist between social isolation and one's physical appearance. According to them, those children whose physical appearance was not within the socially acceptable range were most often isolated by their peer group.

#### **6.2.9 Hypothesis 9**

***THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN SOCIAL ISOLATION BETWEEN PUPILS WHO PARTICIPATE IN SPORTS AND THOSE WHO DO NOT PARTICIPATE IN SPORTS.***

### *Rational*

From the literature study, it becomes evident that being unable to participate in sports may lead to lower social status in a group. According to Rice (1992:192), children with superior build and athletic skills enhance their social prestige and position. Evans and Eder (1993:148) and Hamachek (1990:80) state that one of the reasons why overweight children are viewed as less popular and have more social problems is that they are not able to run and move freely and agilely in play as their peers do. Because they are not able to keep up as easily, they may be excluded more frequently from most activities and this leads to a feeling of being rejected and isolated. Thus, from the foregoing literature study, one can assume that a possible relationship exists between social isolation and sports participation.

#### **6.2.10 HYPOTHESIS 10**

***THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN SOCIAL ISOLATION BETWEEN PUPILS WHOSE HOME LANGUAGE IS THE SAME AS THE MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION AT SCHOOL AND THOSE WHOSE HOME LANGUAGE IS DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF THE MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION AT SCHOOL.***

### *Rational*

There are no available studies to confirm whether a difference in home language to that of the medium of instruction at school has an effect on social isolation. However, the findings of Rice (1992:430) and Fogel and Melson (1988:577) show that best friends are from a similar socio-economic, racial and home background. From these findings, one can assume that having a different home language can possibly have an effect on being accepted or rejected by the peer group.

#### **6.2.11 Hypothesis 11**

***THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN SOCIAL ISOLATION OF PUPILS LIVING WITH BOTH (BIOLOGICAL) PARENTS AND THOSE WHO DO NOT.\****

\* (Those who do not, may be living with either the separated mother or father or with grandparents)

### *Rational*

Several research studies (Doherty and Needle 1991:329, Papalia and Olds 1993:440, Sears et al 1991:295 and Mussen et al 1990:435) show that pupils coming from divorced families have a greater tendency to be socially isolated. Doyle et al (1994:364) indicated that spousal relationships affected aspects of children's peer relations. It was further found that marked differences in children's friendships for single and two parent families existed.

Studies done by Rubenstein and Shaver (Sears et al 1991:295) also found that children of divorce see other people as rejecting, unreliable and untrustworthy of a relationship, thus, they tend not to form relationships with other people. From the above studies, one can conclude that a possible relationship exists between social isolation and pupils from divorced parents.

#### **6.2.12 Hypothesis 12 (a)**

***THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT NEGATIVE CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND PARENTAL SUPERVISION.***



### *Rational*

Research evidence by Conger (1991:599) and Steinberg et al (1991:502) found that children from families where parents supervise them are less likely to become social isolates, while children from laissez-faire parents tend to be immature, irresponsible and overly conforming. The latter children are less able than their peers to assume leadership roles and be accepted in the peer group.

Findings by Anderson et al (1987:133) are contrary to those above, in that Anderson found that too much parental intrusion during childhood can lead to narcissistic difficulties and loneliness during adolescence. However, recent findings by Baker et al (1993:554) indicate that children who are rejected by their peers are more likely than average children to have fewer adults living in the household and are subjected to less supervision.

In the light of the available research evidence, it is possible to draw a conclusion that supervision by parents might relate to social isolation among children.

### **Hypothesis 12 (b)**

***THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT NEGATIVE CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND PARENTAL ACCEPTANCE.***

### *Rational*

Research evidence by Polansky et al (1985:39) indicated that children from neglectful families are socially more isolated than children from homes whose parents are more accepting. Further, Conger (1991:559) found that parents who are permissive or neglecting or who assume a false and exaggerated egalitarianism do not provide the kind of support that adolescents need. Neglecting parents let adolescents "do their own thing" either because they are not involved or do not care. Such parents allow their children to drift without offering them dependable models of responsible behaviour. These children are more likely to display socially unacceptable behaviours which may predispose them to become social isolates. From the research evidence, it can be assumed that the type of parenting, namely, being accepting or neglectful can influence the onset of social isolation among children differently.

#### **Hypothesis 12 (c)**

***THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT NEGATIVE CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND PUPILS OF AUTONOMOUS PARENTS.***

##### *Rational*

From the literature evidence, it becomes evident that the style used in disciplining children affects the type of behaviour patterns they display outside the family situation. According to Fogel and Melson (1988:437) and Papalia and Olds (1993:456), harsh and coercive types of disciplinary techniques exercised by an autocratic and authoritarian type of parents could result in certain children displaying antisocial types of behaviours. Such children could be subsequently rejected by their peers.

Studies by Steinberg et al (1991:502), also revealed that teenagers of authoritative and autonomy granting type of parents tend to be confident, flexible and socially skilled. Those with authoritarian type of parents are more dependent, passive and less socially adept.

From the available research evidence, it is possible to conclude that parents who encourage autonomy among their children may have children who are less socially isolated than children of autocratic type of parents.

#### **Hypothesis 12 (d)**

***THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT POSITIVE CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND FAMILY CONFLICT***

##### *Rational*

The literature study has revealed that children of conflict ridden families are at a greater risk of being socially isolated than children from well co-ordinated families (refer paragraphs 3.5.1 and

5.8). Studies by Mann et al (1989:274), Mussen et al (1990:435) and Rice (1992:107) concluded that the frequency and intensity of family conflict, including both marital and parent-adolescent conflict affects family cohesion and this has an effect on adolescent social development. Adolescents in families with high levels of conflict are more likely to evidence antisocial behaviour, immaturity and low self-esteem than those in families with low levels of conflict.

#### **6.2.13 Hypothesis 13, 14, 15**

There is no available research evidence to substantiate the following hypotheses. However, since the information relating to these hypotheses were available in the Biographical Part of the questionnaire, it was decided to determine if any relationship existed between these variables (grade, gender and birth order) and social isolation.

##### **Hypothesis 13**

***THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN THE AVERAGE SOCIAL ISOLATION OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS AND SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS.***

##### **Hypothesis 14**

***THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN THE AVERAGE SOCIAL ISOLATION OF MALE AND FEMALE PUPILS.***

##### **Hypothesis 15**

***THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN THE AVERAGE SOCIAL ISOLATION OF CHILDREN WITH A DIFFERENT BIRTH ORDER STATUS.***

#### 6.2.14 Hypothesis 16

***THE PROPORTION OF THE VARIANCE OF SOCIAL ISOLATION EXPLAINED JOINTLY BY VARIOUS FACTORS (SUCH AS : SOCIAL COMPETENCE, SELF-ESTEEM, PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING, ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT, MORAL VALUES, PERCEIVED PHYSICAL ABILITY, LANGUAGE, PHYSICAL DISABILITY, SPORTS PARTICIPATION, PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS, MARITAL STATUS, FAMILY SUPERVISION, FAMILY ACCEPTANCE, FAMILY AUTONOMY, FAMILY CONFLICT, GRADE, GENDER AND BIRTH ORDER) IS LARGER THAN THE VARIANCE EXPLAINED BY ANY ONE OF THESE FACTORS TAKEN SEPARATELY.***

#### *Rational*

From the literature study, it has become evident that social isolation can be influenced by a cluster of factors (refer paragraphs 1.2 ; 3.5.3.1 ; and 5.7). According to Fogel and Melson (1988:518), Rice (1992:434) and Balk (1995:285), there are a number of factors that influence social isolation. Evans and Eder (1993:139) emphasised that some researches have shifted the focus of study from a restricted to a more extensive one. They have turned their attention to situational and environmental factors that affect social isolation. Therefore, one can assume that the variance of social isolation explained jointly by the different factors would be larger than the variance explained by a single factor.

### 6.3 SELECTION OF THE SAMPLE

The sample consisted of 180 primary and 180 secondary school pupils from three primary and three secondary schools. The subjects consisted of an equal number of male and female pupils from the lower, middle and higher socio-economic environments. Schools were randomly selected from a list of schools from the South Durban region. Only schools that used a similar method of assessment, namely, where the final mark was made up of 50% of continuous assessment and 50% examination mark were used. This was done in order to ensure that the achievement mark which was used in the research was obtained in the same way. The primary school pupils were selected

randomly from grades 6 and 7 while the secondary school pupils were selected from grades 10 and 11.

In each of the schools, 60 pupils per school were selected. With regard to the primary school, 30 grade six and 30 grade seven pupils made up of 15 girls and 15 boys in each grade were selected. Pupils were randomly selected from all the class registers of each grade. The same method of sampling was used in the case of high schools.

The average age of the primary school pupils was 11 years and 7 months, while that of the secondary school pupils was 15 years and 5 months.

The distribution of pupils in terms of language, gender and grade is given in tables 6.1 and 6.2.

**TABLE 6.1 DISTRIBUTION OF PUPILS IN TERMS OF LANGUAGE AND GRADE**

	GRADE 6	GRADE 7	GRADE 10	GRADE 11	TOTAL
1.*	57	72	78	81	288
2.*	32	18	12	9	71
<b>TOTAL</b>	89	90	90	90	359

1.\* Home language is the same as the medium of instruction used at the school.

2.\* Home language is different from the medium of instruction used at the school

**TABLE 6.2 DISTRIBUTION OF PUPILS IN TERMS OF GRADE AND GENDER**

	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
<b>GRADE 6</b>	45	45	90
<b>GRADE 7</b>	45	45	90
<b>GRADE 10</b>	45	45	90
<b>GRADE 11</b>	45	45	90
<b>TOTAL</b>	180	180	360

#### 6.4 MEASURING INSTRUMENTS USED IN THE INVESTIGATION

A summary of the variables measured and the measuring instruments used to measure these variables are given in table 6.3. A detail description of each instrument would thereafter be given.

The following variables were taken from the Biographical Part of the questionnaire:

1. Age
2. Marital status eg. Divorced/single parents
3. Birth order
4. Sports participation
5. Grade
6. Physical disability
7. Gender

TABLE 6.3 MEASURING INSTRUMENTS

VARIABLES	MEASURING INSTRUMENTS
8. Achievement	PREVIOUS EXAMINATION RESULTS
9. Social isolation	LONELINESS QUESTIONNAIRE
10. Self-esteem	Rosenberg's self-esteem scale
11. Emotional state	Psychological well-being scale
12. Physical attractiveness	Physical attribute questionnaire
13. Perceived physical ability	Perceived physical ability scale (ppa)
14. Social competence and social self-concept	Texas social behaviour inventory
<b>Family climate</b>	Family climate inventory
15. Supervision by parents	
16. Acceptance by parents	
17. Autonomy granting	
18. Family conflict	
19. Moral values	Questionnaire designed to measure values such as honesty, forgiveness, freedom, obedience, responsibility, self-control, helpfulness, happiness, self-respect, love, perseverance, popularity, peace, friendship, ambition, knowledge, competence, independence, bravery and security

#### **6.4.1 Loneliness questionnaire**

A 24-item questionnaire designed by Asher et al (1985:1457) to assess children's feelings of loneliness was used. The 16 primary items focused on children's feelings of loneliness (eg, "I am lonely at school"), feelings of social adequacy versus inadequacy (eg, "I am good at working with other children at school") and subjective estimations of peer status (eg, "I have lots of friends in class"). There were also 8 other filler items focusing on children's hobbies or preferred activities (eg, "I like to paint and draw"). These items were included to help children feel more open and relaxed about indicating their feelings about various topics. Pupils responded to each item on a 4-point scale. (eg, 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = disagree, 4 = strongly disagree). A high score indicated a greater level of social isolation.

##### *Reliability and validity:*

The scale was found to be internally consistent (Cronbach's alpha = 0,90) and internally reliable (Split-half correlation between forms = 0,83 ; Spearman-Brown reliability coefficient = 0,91 and Guttman split-half reliability coefficient = 0,91).

Validity of the scale was determined through factor analysis (quartimax rotation). It was found that a primary factor included all 16 items of the loneliness and social dissatisfaction items. None of the hobby or interest items loaded significantly on this factor.

#### **6.4.2 Rosenberg's self-esteem scale (RSE)**

Self-esteem was measured using the Rosenberg's self-esteem scale. A 17-item self-report measure required respondents to indicate their perceptions of themselves in positive or negative ways. Examples of items found in the scale included ("I am able to do things as well as most other people do" and "I can do anything I really set my mind to"). Pupils had to respond on a 4-point scale ( 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = disagree and 4 = strongly disagree) with higher total scores indicating a stronger self-esteem.

#### *Reliability and validity:*

The test-retest reliability of RSE ranged from 0,85 to 0,88. A Guttman scale reliability coefficient of 0,92 among adolescents was also established. A correlation of 0.60 was also found between the RSE and the Coppersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (Crandell in Brage et al 1993:688), thus indicating that the items in the RSE genuinely measures self-esteem. The scale was also found to have convergent and discriminant validity (Inderbitzen-Pisaruk 1992:156).

#### **6.4.3 Psychological well-being scale**

A six-item scale developed by Dupuy (1970) was used to measure the emotional state of pupils. It measures psychological mood over the past month ; feelings of sadness or hopelessness; stress; anxiety; depression and satisfaction with personal life. Pupils had to respond on a 4-point scale indicating the intensity of their feelings. An example of an item on the scale is as follows:

"During the past month, have you been anxious, worried or upset?"

1 = Very much

2 = Some - enough to bother me

3 = A little bit

4 = Not at all

Scale scores range from 6-30 with higher scores indicating stronger psychological well-being.

#### *Reliability:*

Test-retest reliability of 0,85 and internal consistency reliability of 0.91 was established for the scale (Fazio in Doherty and Needle 1991:331).



#### 6.4.4 Physical attribute questionnaire

A 24-item questionnaire devised by Thorton et al (1993:475) provided for a 5-item assessment of **physical attractiveness**. Sample items are : "I am a physically attractive person " and "I have attractive facial features." Also, included in the questionnaire is a 5-item assessment of self-perceived **social attractiveness**. Sample items are : "I would be liked more if I were more attractive" and " I am uncomfortable when with others who are better looking"

Both set of items were embedded among other statements focusing on health, stress, physical abilities and reflexes. Item responses were made on a 5-point continuum ( strongly agree to strongly disagree) where a higher score reflected greater self-perceived physical and social attractiveness.

##### *Reliability:*

Cronbach alpha coefficients for the scale ranged from 0.82 to 0.90 indicating acceptable levels of reliability for the assessment of physical attractiveness.

#### 6.4.5 Perceived physical ability scale (PPA)

A 10-item scale developed by Ryckman et al (1982) assessing self-perceived confidence in physical performance in the presence of others was used. Sample items are "I am not agile and graceful" and "Because of my agility I have been able to do things which many others could not do"

Pupils responded on a 4-point continuum ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. A high score reflected greater confidence in perceived physical ability.

##### *Reliability and validity:*

Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of 0,85 was recorded for the scale which indicates that it is a reliable measure of perceived physical ability (Ryckman et al 1982:893). Validity of the scale was determined by correlating it with other similar scales. Correlations between the PPA and the Tennessee Physical Self-Concept scale and the Physical Self-Presentation Confidence Scale (PSPC) was 0,43 and 0,52 respectively (Ryckman et al 1982:893). According to Ryckman et al (1982:898), the scale also has adequate discriminant and concurrent validity.

#### 6.4.6 Texas social behaviour inventory

This is a 32-item scale designed by Helmreich et al (1974) to assess individuals' self-concept as a function of their perceived level of social competence (Thorton and Ryckman 1991:90). Sample items are : "I feel secure in social settings" and "I enjoy being in front of large audiences". Item responses used a 5-point scale ranging from, **not at all characteristic of me** to **very much characteristic of me**. A higher score indicates greater social competence and social self-concept.

##### *Reliability and validity:*

Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient ranging from 0,74 to 0,91 were established for this scale (Thorton and Ryckman 1991:90).

Validity of the scale was determined using principal axis factor analysis. In the analysis a large first factor composed primarily of items dealing with confidence was obtained for both sexes. The scale also correlated with the self-esteem scale of the Coppersmith Personality Inventory. For males, the correlation was 0.50, while for females it was 0,57 (Helmreich et al 1974:3). Thus, the scale is a validated objective measure of social self-concept or social competence.

#### 6.4.7 Family climate inventory

Four dimensions of family climate - **supervision, acceptance, autonomy granting and conflict** were assessed by the Family Climate Inventory designed by Kurdek et al (1995:434). Pupils indicated how much they agreed (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) with each of the 24 statements regarding their family. There were six items apiece for supervision, acceptance, autonomy granting and conflict.

Sample items in each of the above categories are as follows:

- i) If I go somewhere after school, I have to tell someone in my family where I am going.
- ii) Someone in my family helps me when I need it.
- iii) Someone in my family encourages me to make my own decisions.
- iv) People in my family solve problems by fighting.

#### *Reliability and validity:*

Cronbach's reliability coefficient for each section was 0,75 ; 0,90 ; 0,85 and 0,91 respectively. The validity of the scale was determined by the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI). The values were 0,87 and 0,94 respectively, indicating an acceptable fit of the data (Kurdek et al 1995:437).

#### **6.4.8 Scale of values**

A scale of values relating to morality was developed. Pupils had to respond as to how they viewed certain values on a 6 point scale ranging from 6 = very important to 1 = not important. Higher scores reflected greater importance for each value. Sample items of the scale included:

**happiness, obedience, responsibility, honesty, helpfulness, self-respect, competence, forgiveness, self-control, love, peace, popularity, freedom, knowledge, friendship, perseverance, ambition, competence, independence, bravery and security.**

### **6.5 PROCEDURE USED IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

#### **6.5.1 Format of the questionnaire**

The questionnaire consisted of nine parts (Refer to Appendix A). Part A of the questionnaire recorded the Biographical Information, while parts B to I measured certain variables. A summary of the different parts of the questionnaire which measured the various variables as well as the specific items measuring these variables is given in table 6.4.

**TABLE 6.4 DISTRIBUTION OF THE ITEMS MEASURING THE VARIOUS  
VARIABLES IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

<b>VARIABLE</b>	<b>ITEMS</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Loneliness (PART B)	11, 13, 14, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22, 24, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, 34	16
Self-esteem (PART C)	35 -51	17
Emotional state (PART D)	52 -57	6
Physical attractiveness (PART E)	59, 61, 64, 66, 68	5
Social attractiveness (PART E)	69, 72, 74, 77, 79	5
Perceived physical ability (PART F)	82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91	10
Social competence and social self-esteem (PART G)	92 - 123	32
Family climate (PART H)		
Supervision	125, 127, 130, 137, 144, 147	
Acceptance	124, 132, 134, 136, 138, 140	
Autonomy granting	126, 129, 133, 139, 141, 143	
Conflict	128, 131, 135, 142, 145, 146	24
Values related to morality (PART I)	148-167	20
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>135</b>

#### **6.5.2 Permission to carry out the research using school pupils**

Permission was sought from the Director of Education (South Durban Region) to use pupils in the research programme.

Permission was granted under the following conditions:

The research should not disturb the normal school programme, also, prior permission and arrangements should be made with the principals of the six schools involved in the testing programme. (Refer Appendix B for letter of approval)

### **6.5.3 Administering of the questionnaire**

The questionnaire was administered by the researcher with the assistance of the teachers and school counsellors during the month of March 1998. It was explained to the pupils that the questionnaire was not a test, and as such, there were no right or wrong answers. Therefore, they were asked to respond to the items as honestly as possible. Pupils were also reminded that their identity would remain anonymous since their names were not required on the answer sheets. The instructions to be followed when responding to the items were explained to the pupils.

The questionnaire took approximately 45 minutes to complete by the secondary school pupils, while in the case of the primary school pupils, it took approximately 60 minutes. After completing the questionnaire, pupils were asked to check that all items were responded to and that there were no blanks.

Each questionnaire had an allotted number and the teachers and counsellors wrote the names of pupils against these allotted numbers on a separate sheet of paper. Later, the teachers and school counsellors filled in the achievement scores of the subjects on this sheet of paper. The researcher then transferred these scores onto the questionnaires.

## **6.6 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, the planning and the execution of the empirical investigation was discussed. The following chapter will look at the statistical processing and the interpretation of the data.

## RESULTS OF THE INVESTIGATION

### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

The data of the empirical investigation was processed in order to test hypotheses that were propounded in chapter 6 (refer paragraph 6.2). The procedure in which it was done will be discussed in this chapter.

The following statistical procedures were used in testing the various hypotheses:

- \* Pearson Product-Moment correlations were calculated to determine the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable (social isolation). These were done to test Hypotheses 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 12.
- \* T-tests were used to ascertain whether averages differed significantly between two groups with regard to the dependent variable (social isolation). This was done for Hypotheses 8, 9, 10 and 14.
- \* F-tests were used to ascertain whether averages differed significantly between more than two groups with regard to the dependent variable (social isolation). This was done to test hypothesis 11, 13 and 15.
- \* Regression analysis were used to determine which variables explained the variance in social isolation best. This was done to test Hypotheses 5 and 16.

## 7.2 TESTING OF HYPOTHESIS 1

With regard to Hypothesis 1, stated in paragraph 6.2.1, the following null hypothesis was tested:

***THERE IS NO SIGNIFICANT NEGATIVE CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND SOCIAL COMPETENCE.***

This hypothesis was stated for both primary and secondary school pupils. In order to test the hypothesis, the Pearson Product-Moment correlation was calculated between social isolation and social competence. A total of 179 primary and 180 secondary school pupils were used. The results appear in in Table 7.1.

**TABLE 7.1 CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND SOCIAL COMPETENCE.**

SOCIAL COMPETENCE		
SOCIAL ISOLATION	$r = -0,79$ $p < 0,01$	PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS
SOCIAL ISOLATION	$r = -0,76$ $p < 0,01$	SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS

On the basis of the figures obtained in table 7.1 , the null hypothesis can be rejected at the 1% level of significance. According to the correlation coefficients obtained, a high negative correlation exists between social isolation and social competence in both primary and secondary school children. Socially competent children are those who have a strong social self-concept and feel confident to relate to others in social situations. They are endowed with social skills (such as being polite and able to initiate and maintain a discussion with others) which make them less likely to be rejected. Therefore, it would seem that social competence is associated with social isolation. The less socially competent children are, the greater the chances are of them being socially isolated.

Pearson Product-Moment correlations of  $r = -0,79$  for primary school pupils and  $r = -0,76$  for secondary school pupils were obtained. According to the results 62% and 58% of the variance in social isolation can be explained by social competence in the case of primary and secondary school pupils respectively. The results of this research also supports the findings of Papalia and Olds (1993:453), Sears et al (1991:292), Wentzel et al (1993:819) and Balk (1995:283) that the level of social competence and the type of social self-concept a person has, affects his/her chances of becoming socially isolated. The higher the social competence of the person, the less isolated he/she seems to be.

### 7.3 TESTING HYPOTHESIS 2

For Hypothesis 2, stated in paragraph 6.2.2, the following null hypothesis was tested for both primary and secondary school pupils:

**THERE IS NO SIGNIFICANT NEGATIVE CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND THE LEVEL OF PUPILS' SELF-ESTEEM.**

To test the hypothesis, 179 primary and 180 secondary school pupils were used. According to the results in Table 7.2, high negative correlations were obtained between social isolation and self-esteem in both primary and secondary school pupils.

**TABLE 7.2 CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND SELF-ESTEEM**

<b>SELF-ESTEEM</b>		
<b>SOCIAL ISOLATION</b>	$r = -0,81$ $p < 0.01$	<b>PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS</b>
<b>SOCIAL ISOLATION</b>	$r = -0,74$ $p < 0,01$	<b>SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS</b>



The null hypothesis in both cases can be rejected at the 1% level of significance. From the results obtained, 66% and 55% of the variance in social isolation can be explained by self-esteem in both the primary and secondary school pupils respectively. The results of this research supports all previous research findings as noted in paragraph 6.2.2, namely, low self-esteem is associated with a high level of social isolation.

#### 7.4 TESTING HYPOTHESIS 3

With regard to Hypothesis 3, as mentioned in paragraph 6.2.3, the following null hypothesis was tested for both primary and secondary school pupils:

***THERE IS NO SIGNIFICANT NEGATIVE CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF PUPILS.***

Psychological well-being is an indication of a person's emotional state. Pupils with a healthy psychological well-being are those who are not anxious, depressed or aggressive. They have a stable emotional make up and can easily relate to others in social situations. It would seem that a healthy psychological well-being is related to social isolation. The weaker the psychological well-being of a person, the greater are the chances of him being socially isolated.

The results of the test appear in Table 7.3.

**TABLE 7.3 CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING**

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING		
SOCIAL ISOLATION	$r = -0,62$ $p < 0,01$	PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS
SOCIAL ISOLATION	$r = -0,37$ $p < 0,01$	SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS

The null hypothesis can be rejected at the 1% level of significance in both instances. A high negative correlation of  $r = -0,62$  in the case of primary school pupils and a low negative correlation of  $r = -0,37$  in the case of secondary school pupils was obtained. There is a stronger relationship between social isolation and the psychological well-being of primary school pupils. One of the possible reasons for this is that primary school children are younger and their level of affective development is not as advanced as that of secondary school pupils. They may have not as yet learnt how to cope with difficulties in life, such as parental divorce and are thus more prone to develop emotional problems such as depression. Therefore, they may have a lower psychological well-being which is strongly associated with social isolation. The present findings which indicate that a weak psychological well-being is associated with a high level of social isolation replicates the research findings of Panella and Henggeler (1989:9), Kovacs and Goldston (1991:388), Fogel and Melson (1988:518), Inderbitzen-Pisaruk et al (1992:151), Sears et al (1991:292) and Koenig et al (1994:27) who also found that children with a weak psychological well-being are at a greater risk of being socially isolated.

## **7.5 TESTING HYPOTHESIS 4**

The following null hypothesis was formulated with regard to hypothesis 4, stated in paragraph 6.2.4:

***THERE IS NO SIGNIFICANT NEGATIVE CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT.***

The above hypothesis was stated for both primary and secondary school pupils. To test the hypothesis, 179 primary and 180 secondary school pupils were used.

**TABLE 7.4    CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT**

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT		
SOCIAL ISOLATION	$r = -0,54$ $p < 0,01$	PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS
SOCIAL ISOLATION	$r = -0,35$ $p < 0,01$	SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS

According to Table 7.4, the null hypothesis can be rejected at the 1% level of significance. There is a moderate negative correlation between social isolation and academic achievement in the case of primary school pupils, while in the case of adolescents there is a low negative correlation. From the results obtained, 29% and 12% of the variance in social isolation can be explained by academic achievement in primary and secondary school pupils respectively. There is a stronger relationship between academic achievement and social isolation for primary school pupils. A possible explanation for the large difference in the correlation figures may be attributed to the fact that primary school pupils place greater emphasis on academic achievement than secondary school pupils. Primary school pupils may probably view other pupils who excell in academic work as heroes and leaders, while in the case of secondary school pupils, pupils who excell in sports may be held in greater esteem than pupils who excell in academic work.

These findings are consistent with previous research findings as noted in paragraph 6.2.4, namely, there is a relationship between academic achievement and social isolation. Pupils with poorer academic achievement are more susceptible to become social isolates than pupils with higher academic achievement.

**7.6      TESTING HYPOTHESIS 5**

Relating to Hypothesis 5, stated in paragraph 6.2.5, the following null hypothesis was formulated for both primary and secondary school pupils:

***THERE ARE NO SIGNIFICANT CORRELATIONS BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND MORALITY ( AS EXPRESSED IN VALUES SUCH AS HONESTY, POPULARITY, FREEDOM, FRIENDSHIP, OBEDIENCE, RESPONSIBILITY, HELPFULNESS, HAPPINESS, PEACE, LOVE, SELF-RESPECT, INDEPENDENCE, FORGIVENESS, AMBITION, SELF-CONTROL, PERSEVERANCE, KNOWLEDGE, COMPETENCE, BRAVERY AND SECURITY).***

To test this null hypothesis, 179 primary and 180 secondary school pupils were used. Pearson Product-Moment correlations were calculated between social isolation and these values. The results of the test are given in Table 7.5.

**TABLE 7.5 CORELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND VALUES RELATED TO MORALITY**

Variable	PRIMARY SCHOOL		SECONDARY SCHOOL	
	r	P	r	P
Happiness	-0,49	p<0,01	-0,39	p<0,01
Obedience	-0,65	p<0,01	-0,32	p<0,01
Responsibility	-0,64	p<0,01	-0,44	p<0,01
Honesty	-0,55	p<0,01	-0,38	p<0,01
Perseverance	-0,44	p<0,01	-0,26	p<0,01
Popularity	-0,19	p<0,01	-0,06	p<0,01
Helpfulness	-0,54	p<0,01	-0,39	p<0,01
Freedom	-0,32	p<0,01	-0,27	p<0,01
Friendship	-0,63	p<0,01	-0,58	p<0,01
Self-respect	-0,63	p<0,01	-0,49	p<0,01
Love	-0,62	p<0,01	-0,40	p<0,01
Ambition	-0,52	p<0,01	-0,34	p<0,01
Knowledge	-0,60	p<0,01	-0,44	p<0,01
Competence	-0,43	p<0,01	-0,27	p<0,01
Forgiveness	-0,49	p<0,01	-0,37	p<0,01
Independence	-0,44	p<0,01	-0,27	p<0,01
Self-control	-0,54	p<0,01	-0,45	p<0,01
Bravery	-0,40	p<0,01	-0,27	p<0,01
Security	-0,60	p<0,01	-0,50	p<0,01
Peace (Harmony)	-0,63	p<0,01	-0,48	p<0,01

From the results obtained in Table 7.5, it is noted that there are significant correlations between the values and social isolation. In order to show which values are most significant, a regression analysis was done for both primary and secondary school pupils. The results are given in Tables 7.6 and 7.7. Social isolation was used as the dependent variable while the moral values were used as predictor variables. In Tables 7.6 and 7.7,  $R^2$  indicates the proportion of the variance in social isolation that can be explained by the predictor variables.

**TABLE 7.6 PROPORTION OF THE VARIANCE OF SOCIAL ISOLATION OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS EXPLAINED BY CERTAIN PREDICTOR VARIABLES**

VARIABLE	$R^2$	F	D.F.	P
OBEDIENCE	0,42	128,80	1,177	<0,01
SELF-RESPECT	0,50	90,85	2,176	<0,01
KNOWLEDGE	0,53	67,91	3,175	<0,01

In step 1, *Obedience* was included and it explained the largest proportion of the variance in social isolation, namely, 42%.  $R^2$  is significant with  $F(1,177) = 128,80$ ;  $p < 0,01$ .

In step 2, *Self-respect* was included.  $R^2$  changed from 0,42 to 0,50, which implies that 50% of the variance in social isolation in primary school pupils is explained by obedience and self-respect. The  $R^2$  of 0,50 is significant with  $F(2,176) = 90,85$ ;  $p < 0,01$ .

In step 3, *Knowledge* was included.  $R^2$  changed from 0,50 to 0,53, which implies that 53% of the variance in social isolation of primary school pupils is explained by obedience, self-respect and knowledge. The  $R^2$  of 0,53 is significant with  $F(3,175) = 67,91$ ;  $p < 0,01$ .

No other variable could explain a significantly larger proportion of the variance already explained by the previous variables. One could therefore conclude that, with regard to social isolation of

primary school pupils, obedience, self-respect and knowledge can be considered as the more important values related to social isolation.

**TABLE 7.7 PROPORTION OF THE VARIANCE OF SOCIAL ISOLATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS EXPLAINED BY CERTAIN PREDICTOR VARIABLES**

VARIABLES	R <sup>2</sup>	F	D.F	P
FRIENDSHIP	0,34	91,99	1,178	<0,01
RESPONSIBILITY	0,37	51,03	2,177	<0,01
PEACE (HARMONY)	0,38	35,40	3,176	<0,01

The same process was followed with regard to adolescents. It was found that *friendship* , *responsibility* and *peace (harmony)* accounts for more or less 38% of the variance in social isolation. The R<sup>2</sup> of 0,38 is significant with F (3,176) = 35,40 ; p < 0,01

The findings also reveal that the values related to social isolation differ for primary and secondary school pupils. With regard to primary school children, being obedient can be seen as one of the main factors preventing rejection by peers. In the case of secondary school pupils, the ability to develop friendship (being socially competent) can prevent social isolation. The other important values (self-respect, knowledge, responsibility and peace) as reflected in Table 7.6 and 7.7 are related to morality which concurs with previous research findings (refer paragraph 6.2.5) that a relationship exists between morality and social isolation. Children with higher moral values are less likely to be rejected than those with lower moral values.

## 7.7 TESTING HYPOTHESIS 6

With regard to hypothesis 6, stated in paragraph 6.2.6, the following null hypothesis was formulated for both primary and secondary school pupils.

## ***THERE IS NO SIGNIFICANT NEGATIVE CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND PERCEIVED PHYSICAL ABILITY***

Perceived physical ability is an indication of the perception children have of their physical capabilities (see paragraph 6.2.6). Pupils with a strong perception of their physical ability are usually confident to take part in sports and games while those with a lower perception are usually pessimistic of taking part because they feel that they don't have the physical ability to enable them to succeed in such games.

In order to ascertain whether a significant negative correlation exists between social isolation and perceived physical ability, 179 primary and 180 secondary school pupils were used. Pearson-Product Moment correlations were calculated for both primary and secondary school pupils. The results of the tests are given in Table 7.8.

**TABLE 7.8 CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND PERCEIVED PHYSICAL ABILITY**

<b>PERCEIVED PHYSICAL ABILITY</b>			
<b>SOCIAL ISOLATION</b>	<b><math>r = -0,62</math></b>	<b><math>p &lt; 0,01</math></b>	<b>PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS</b>
<b>SOCIAL ISOLATION</b>	<b><math>r = -0,47</math></b>	<b><math>p &lt; 0,01</math></b>	<b>SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS</b>

The null hypothesis can be rejected at the 1% level of significance for both primary and secondary school pupils. In the case of primary school pupils, a high negative correlation of  $r = -0,62$  while in the case of secondary school pupils, a moderate negative correlation of  $r = -0,47$  was obtained. A stronger relationship exists between social isolation and perceived physical ability for primary school pupils. A possible explanation for this difference is that primary school pupils place greater emphasis on perceived physical ability than secondary school pupils. Most of the secondary school pupils have already reached their peak in terms of physical development and have a more realistic view of their physical potential, while in the case of primary school pupils, they are still developing physically and their perception of their physical ability may be more idealistic. However, from the results, one can deduce that a significant negative correlation exists between social isolation and perceived physical ability. The higher the perception of physical ability the pupil has, the less

isolated he/she seems to be. This finding is consistent with previous research findings of Rice (1992:192) and Evans and Eder (1993:148), as discussed in paragraph 6.2.6, where it was found that children who have higher perceptions of their physical ability are less likely to be socially isolated since they are able to participate more frequently in extra-curricular activities and sports.

## 7.8 TESTING HYPOTHESIS 7

For Hypothesis 7, stated in paragraph 6.2.7, the following null hypothesis was tested:

***THERE IS NO SIGNIFICANT NEGATIVE CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND SELF-PERCEIVED PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS***

This hypothesis was tested for both primary and secondary school pupils. To test the hypothesis, 179 primary and 180 secondary school pupils were used. Pearson Product-Moment correlations were calculated for both groups and the results are given in Table 7.9.

**TABLE 7.9 CORRELATION BETWEEN SELF-PERCEIVED PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS AND SOCIAL ISOLATION**

<b>SELF-PERCEIVED PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS</b>			
<b>SOCIAL ISOLATION</b>	<b>r = -0,60</b>	<b>p &lt; 0,01</b>	<b>PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS</b>
<b>SOCIAL ISOLATION</b>	<b>r = -0,45</b>	<b>p &lt; 0,01</b>	<b>SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS</b>

According to the figures obtained, the null hypothesis can be rejected at the 1% level of significance for both groups. In the case of primary school pupils, a high negative correlation of  $r = -0,60$  was obtained. With regard to secondary school pupils, a moderate negative correlation exists between social isolation and self-perceived physical attractiveness ( $r = -0,45$ ). A stronger relationship exists between social isolation and self-perceived physical attractiveness for primary school pupils. A possible reason for this difference might be that primary school pupils place greater emphasis on a concrete characteristic such as physical attractiveness than secondary school



pupils. Primary school children think concretely and that might be the reason why they consider physical appearance to be an important characteristic of a friend. They might also openly tease someone who is unattractive since they have not as yet mastered sophisticated social skills. Therefore, it can be expected for primary school pupils to have stronger perceptions of their physical appearance than secondary school pupils.

These results also indicate that pupils who perceive themselves to be physically attractive are less vulnerable to become social isolates. This is in accordance with the results of Lerner et al (1991:300), Evans and Eder (1993:166), Lau (1990:113) and Rubin et al (1993:53) who found that children who are attractive are generally more popular with their peers.

## 7.9 TESTING HYPOTHESIS 8

With regard to Hypothesis 8, stated in paragraph 6.2.8, the following null hypothesis was tested:

***THERE IS NO SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN SOCIAL ISOLATION BETWEEN PUPILS WHO ARE PHYSICALLY DISABLED AND THOSE WHO ARE NOT.***

This hypothesis was stated for both primary and secondary school pupils.

To test Hypothesis 8, 179 primary and 180 secondary school pupils were used. The results are given in Table 7.10 and 7.11.

**TABLE 7.10 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE AVERAGE ISOLATION SCORES OF PHYSICALLY DISABLED AND PHYSICALLY NORMAL PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS**

VARIABLE	GROUP	NO.	MEAN	S	T	D.F	P
PHYSICAL	A	3	38,00	3,60			
DISABILITY	B	176	29,19	10,78	4,61	177	P<0.01

In the case of primary school pupils, Group A consisted of 3 physically disabled pupils, while Group B consisted of 176 physically normal pupils.

To ascertain whether social isolation of Group A pupils differed from Group B pupils, the means of the both groups were calculated. The difference between the means was 8,81 . A t-value was calculated to determine whether the two means differed significantly. According to Table 7.10, a t-value of 4,61 was obtained with  $p < 0,01$ . These findings reveal that the difference between the means is significant, and therefore the null hypothesis can be rejected at the 1% level of significance. Thus, one can conclude that there is a significant difference between the means of the two groups of pupils. Primary school pupils who are physically disabled suffer greater social isolation than physically normal pupils.

**TABLE 7.11 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE AVERAGE ISOLATION SCORES OF PHYSICALLY DISABLED AND PHYSICALLY NORMAL SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS**

VARIABLE	GROUP	NO.	MEAN	S	T	D.F.	P
PHYSICAL	A	10	36,20	12,91			"
DISABILITY	B	170	26,12	9,64	3,14	178	$P < 0,05$

In the case of secondary school pupils, Group A consisted of 10 disabled pupils, while Group B consisted of 170 physically normal pupils. The difference between the means is 10,08. A t-value of 3,14 was obtained with  $p < 0,05$ . The findings reveal that the difference between the means is significant, and therefore, the hypothesis can be rejected at the 5% level of significance. Thus, one can conclude that there is a significant difference between the means of the two groups of pupils. Adolescents who are physically disabled, suffer greater social isolation than physically normal adolescents.

The results of this research supports the findings of Evans and Eder (1993:166), Henrick (1988:126), Lerner et al (1991:300), Page (1992:150) and Rubin et al (1993:53) who found that

physically disabled and unattractive children were at greater risk of becoming social isolates (refer paragraph 6.2.8).

#### 7.10 TESTING HYPOTHESIS 9

For Hypothesis 9, stated in paragraph 6.2.9, the following null hypothesis was formulated:

***THERE IS NO SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN SOCIAL ISOLATION BETWEEN PUPILS WHO PARTICIPATE IN SPORTS AND THOSE WHO DO NOT PARTICIPATE IN SPORTS.***

This hypothesis was tested for both primary and secondary school pupils. The results are given in Table 7.12 and 7.13 for primary and secondary school pupils respectively.

**TABLE 7.12 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE AVERAGE ISOLATION SCORES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS WHO PARTICIPATE IN SPORTS AND THOSE WHO DO NOT**

VARIABLE	GROUP	NO.	MEAN	S	T	D.F	P
SPORTS	A	147	27,69	8,82			
PARTICIPATION	B	32	38,78	16,27	5,40	177	< 0,01

In the case of primary school pupils , Group A consisted of 147 pupils who participate in sports and Group B with 32 pupils who do not participate in sports. The difference between the means is 11,09 . A t-value of 5,40 was obtained with  $p < 0,01$ . The null hypothesis can therefore be rejected at the 1% level of significance. The results reveal that primary school pupils who participate in sports experience social isolation to a lesser extent compared to those who do not participate in sports.

**TABLE 7.13 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE AVERAGE ISOLATION SCORES OF  
SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS WHO PARTICIPATE IN SPORTS AND  
THOSE WHO DO NOT**

VARIABLE	GROUP	NO.	MEAN	S	T	D.F.	P
SPORTS PARTICIPATION	A	131	23,82	6,98	7,01	178	<0,01
	B	49	34,32	12,81			

In the case of secondary school pupils, Group A consisted of 131 pupils who participate in sports, while Group B consisted of 49 pupils who do not participate in sports. The difference between the means is 10,50. A t-value of 7,01 was obtained with  $p < 0,01$ , indicating that the null hypothesis can be rejected at the 1% level of significance.

The results, similar to that of primary school pupils, reveal that there is a significant difference between the means. The degree of social isolation differed for secondary school pupils who participated in sports and those who did not. The results of this study is in accordance with the findings of Rice (1990:192), Evans and Eder (1993:148) and Hamachek (1990:80) who found that children who participate in sports are more popular among their peers and are less likely to be rejected.

#### **7.11 TESTING HYPOTHESIS 10**

In relation to Hypothesis 10, stated in paragraph 6.2.10, the following null hypothesis was formulated for both primary and secondary school pupils:

***THERE IS NO SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN SOCIAL ISOLATION BETWEEN  
PUPILS WHOSE HOME LANGUAGE IS THE SAME AS THE MEDIUM OF  
INSTRUCTION AT SCHOOL AND THOSE WHOSE HOME LANGUAGE IS  
DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF THE SCHOOL.***

To test the above hypothesis, 179 primary and 180 secondary school pupils were used. T-values were computed to determine whether the differences between the means are significant. The findings for both the primary and secondary school pupils are reported separately in Tables 7.14 and 7.15 respectively.

**TABLE 7.14 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AVERAGE ISOLATION SCORES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS WHOSE HOME LANGUAGE IS THE SAME AS THE MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION AT SCHOOL AND THOSE WHOSE HOME LANGUAGE IS NOT**

VARIABLE	GROUP	NO.	MEAN	S	T	D.F	P
HOME LANGUAGE	A	129	26,78	9,43			
	B	50	37,14	12,40	6,0	177	<0,01

**TABLE 7.15 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AVERAGE ISOLATION SCORES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS WHOSE HOME LANGUAGE IS THE SAME AS THE MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION AT SCHOOL AND THOSE WHOSE HOME LANGUAGE IS NOT**

VARIABLE	GROUP	NO.	MEAN	S	T	D.F.	P
HOME LANGUAGE	A	161	25,23	8,66			
	B	19	38,94	12,82	6,16	178	<0,01

With regard to primary school pupils, Group A consisted of 129 pupils whose home language was the same as the medium of instruction at school, while Group B consisted of 50 pupils whose home language was different to that of the medium of instruction at school. A t-value of 6,0 with  $p < 0,01$  indicates that the null hypothesis can be rejected at the 1% level of significance. The difference between the means is 10,36 with Group B having a greater mean. This means that the level of isolation differs for pupils whose home language is same as the medium of instruction at school and those whose home language is not. Children whose home language is the same as the medium of instruction at school are less socially isolated compared to those whose home language is different from the medium of instruction of school.

In the case of secondary school pupils, Group A consisted of 161 pupils whose home language was the same as that of the medium of instruction at the school, while Group B consisted of 19 pupils whose home language differed. The difference between the means of the two groups is 13,71. A t-value was calculated to determine whether the two means differed significantly. According to Table 7.15, a t-value of 6,16 was obtained with  $p < 0,01$ . Thus, the null hypothesis can be rejected at the 1% level of significance which means that the level of isolation also differs for secondary school pupils whose home language is the same as the medium of instruction at school and those whose home language is not.

Although very little research has been done on social isolation and home language in relation to the medium of instruction at school, the findings of Rice (1992:430) and Fogel and Melson (1988:577) seem to support the results of the present study. According to them, best friends are from similar socio-economic, racial and home background. From this, it can be deduced that people coming from the same home background also speak the same home language, therefore, a pupil whose home language is different from the rest of the group at school, may face the risk of being isolated. One can therefore conclude that home language in relation to the medium of instruction at school, relates to social isolation. Children whose home language is different from the medium of instruction at school are more likely to be socially isolated because they come from a different cultural background.

## 7.12 TESTING HYPOTHESIS 11

In order to test Hypothesis 11, stated in paragraph 6.2.11, the following null hypothesis was tested for both primary and secondary school pupils:

***THERE IS NO SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN THE AVERAGE SOCIAL ISOLATION OF PUPILS LIVING WITH BOTH (BIOLOGICAL) PARENTS AND THOSE WHO DO NOT. \****

(\* Those who do not may be living with either the divorced mother or father or with grandparents/guardians)

The subjects (both primary and secondary school pupils) were divided into the following groups:

GROUP 1 : Pupils living with both (biological) parents

GROUP 2 : Pupils living with divorced mother

GROUP 3 : Pupils living with divorced father

GROUP 4 : Pupils living with grandparents/guardians

The F - test was used to determine whether there is a significant difference between the average social isolation of pupils in the different groups.

#### **7.12.1 Comparison between the four groups of primary school pupils with regard to social isolation.**

The average social isolation for each of the four groups was calculated. In order to compare these averages, an analysis of variance was carried out. The results appear in table 7.16.

**TABLE 7.16 RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF SOCIAL ISOLATION  
IN RELATION TO PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS' PARENTAL STATUS**

GROUP	NO.	MEAN	S.D.
1	138	27,33	8,81
2	25	35,60	15,75
3	8	39,25	9,55
4	8	42,00	16,80

$$F(3,175) = 10,87 \quad P < 0,01$$

There is a significant difference between the average social isolation of the four groups. The null hypothesis can be rejected at the 1% level of significance.

In order to determine between which groups this difference exists, t-values were calculated which appear in Table 7.17.

**TABLE 7.17 T-TEST ANALYSIS OF THE VARIABLE SOCIALISATION OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS IN RELATION TO PARENTAL STATUS**

GROUPS	DIFFERENCE BET. THE MEANS	t value	SIGNIFICANCE
1 - 2	8,27	$t > 2,65$	$p < 0,05$
1 - 3	11,92	$t > 2,65$	$p < 0,05$
1 - 4	14,67	$t > 2,65$	$p < 0,05$
2 - 3	3,65	$t < 2,65$	$p > 0,05$
2 - 4	6,40	$t < 2,65$	$p > 0,05$
3 - 4	2,75	$t < 2,65$	$p > 0,05$

There appears to be a significant difference between Groups 1 and 2, 1 and 3 and 1 and 4. The results indicate that the average social isolation differs for primary school pupils who live with both (biological) parents and those who live with either the divorced father or mother or with grandparents/guardians. It would seem that social isolation is most prominent in the family structure where pupils live with grandparents or guardians. The possible reason for this, is that, these pupils do not receive the support, warmth and acceptance of either of the parents as compared to Group 1 where they are accepted by both parents or Group 2 and 3 where they are accepted by either one of the parents. Pupils living with neither of the biological parents are more likely to suffer emotional setbacks, become delinquents in the absence of parental supervision and display more behavioural problems than pupils from the other types of family structures. This display of emotional and behavioural problems could affect their relationship with other pupils and as a result they could become socially isolated.

These results replicate the findings of Doherty and Needle (1991:329), Papalia and Olds (1993:440), Sears et al (1991:295) and Doyle et al (1994:364) where it was found that pupils from divorced families have a greater tendency to be socially isolated. Doyle et al (1994:364) further



found that there were marked differences in children's friendships for single and two parent families.

#### **7.12.2 Comparison between the four groups of secondary school pupils with regard to social isolation.**

Similar procedures were used as to that of the primary school pupils (refer paragraph 7.12.1). The results are given in Tables 7.18 and 7.19.

**TABLE 7.18 RESULTS OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF SOCIAL ISOLATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS IN RELATION TO PARENTAL STATUS**

GROUP	NO.	MEAN	S.D.
1	141	25,24	9,14
2	24	33,58	11,50
3	5	25,40	8,61
4	10	31,00	12,90

$$F(3,176) = 5,77 \quad P < 0,01$$

There is a significant difference between the average social isolation of the four groups. The null hypothesis can therefore be rejected at the 1% level of significance.

In order to determine between which groups differences exist, t-values were calculated. These appear in Table 7.19.

**TABLE 7.19 T-TEST ANALYSIS OF THE VARIABLE SOCIAL ISOLATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS IN RELATION TO PARENTAL STATUS.**

GROUPS	DIFFERENCE BET. THE MEANS	t - value	SIGNIFICANCE
1 - 2	8,33	$t > 2,65$	$p < 0,05$
1 - 3	0,15	$t < 2,65$	$p > 0,05$
1 - 4	5,75	$t < 2,65$	$p > 0,05$
2 - 3	8,18	$t < 2,65$	$p > 0,05$
2 - 4	2,58	$t < 2,65$	$p > 0,05$
3 - 4	5,60	$t < 2,65$	$p > 0,05$

There appears to be a significant difference between Groups 1 and 2. The results indicate that the average social isolation differs for adolescents who live with both (biological) parents and those who live with a divorced mother. Although the results are not as conclusive to that of the primary school pupils, namely, that children living with both biological parents differ in the average social isolation to those children living with either single divorced parents or grandparents, it does however indicate to some extent that differences in the level of social isolation of adolescents can be attributed to marital status of parents. Pupils living with the divorced mother experience greater social isolation than the other groups. This finding is similar to those research findings of Doyl et al (1994:364), Doherty and Needle (1991:329) and Sears et al (1991:295) who found marked differences in children's friendships for single and two parent families (refer paragraph 6.2.11).

### **7.13 TESTING HYPOTHESIS 12 (a)**

With regard to the testing of hypothesis 12 (a), as stated in paragraph 6.2.12, the following null hypothesis was stated :

***THERE IS NO SIGNIFICANT NEGATIVE CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND PARENTAL SUPERVISION.***

This hypothesis was stated for both primary and secondary school pupils.

Parental supervision is an indication of the perceived level of control and monitoring which parents exercise over their children. This involves watching over what children do and constantly guiding them so that they may not be adversely affected by their actions and behaviours.

In order to test this hypothesis, 179 primary and 180 secondary school pupils were used. Pearson-Product Moment correlations were calculated for social isolation and parental supervision for both primary and secondary pupils. The results are given in Table 7.20.

**TABLE 7.20 CORELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND PARENTAL SUPERVISION**

PARENTAL SUPERVISION		
SOCIAL ISOLATION	$r = -0,60$ $p < 0,01$	PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS
SOCIAL ISOLATION	$r = -0,51$ $p < 0,01$	SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS

According to the results obtained, the null hypothesis can be rejected at the 1% level of significance for both primary and secondary school pupils. In the case of primary school pupils, there is a high negative correlation ( $r = -0,60$ ) between social isolation and parental supervision. In the case of secondary school pupils there is a moderate negative correlation ( $r = -0,51$ ). These findings are similar to that of Conger (1991:599), Steinberg et al (1991:502) and Baker et al (1993:554) as reported in paragraph 6.2.12 where it was noted that children whose parents supervise them (ie, watch over what they do and guide them) are less likely to become social isolates.

## TESTING HYPOTHESIS 12 (b)

In order to test Hypothesis 12 (b) , as stated in paragraph 6.2.12 , the following null hypothesis was formulated for both primary and secondary school pupils.

***THERE IS NO SIGNIFICANT NEGATIVE CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND PARENTAL ACCEPTANCE.***

Parental acceptance is the perceived level of warmth and support parents offer to their children. It is an indication of how parents understand, love, care and are willing to help solve the problems facing their children (refer paragraph 6.2.12).

To determine the nature of the correlation between social isolation and parental acceptance, 179 primary and 180 secondary school pupils were used. The Pearson-Product Moment Correlation was calculated in each instance. The findings are reported in Table 7.21.

**TABLE 7.21 CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND PARENTAL ACCEPTANCE**

PARENTAL ACCEPTANCE		
SOCIAL ISOLATION	$r = -0,68$ $p < 0,01$	PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS
SOCIAL ISOLATION	$r = -0,60$ $p < 0,01$	SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS

From the results of Table 7.21, the null hypothesis can be rejected at the 1% level of significance. In both the primary and secondary school pupils, a high negative correlation exists. In the case of primary school pupils, 46% of the variance in social isolation while 36% in the case of secondary school pupils can be explained by parental acceptance. From the results, it would appear that an association exists between social isolation and parental acceptance. Pupils with little parental acceptance are more likely to become social isolates than children of accepting parents. These findings replicate those of Conger (1991:559) and Polansky et al (1985:39) who

found that children in neglectful families are socially more isolated than children from homes whose parents are more accepting (refer paragraph 6.2.12).

#### TESTING HYPOTHESIS 12 (c)

For Hypothesis 12 (c), stated in paragraph 6.2.12, the following null hypothesis was tested:

***THERE IS NO SIGNIFICANT NEGATIVE CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND PUPILS OF AUTONOMOUS PARENTS.***

Autonomous parents are those who allow their children to make decisions and those who encourage their children to be self-efficient. It reflects the extent to which parents try to help their children feel that they can do things on their own (refer paragraph 6.2.12).

The null hypothesis was tested for both primary and secondary school pupils. To test the hypothesis, 179 primary and 180 secondary school pupils were used. The Pearson-Product Moment correlation was calculated to determine if a significant correlation existed.

**TABLE 7.22 CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND AUTONOMOUS PARENTS**

AUTONOMOUS PARENTS		
SOCIAL ISOLATION	$r = -0,65$ $p < 0,01$	PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS
SOCIAL ISOLATION	$r = -0,53$ $p < 0,01$	SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS

From the results obtained in Table 7.22, the null hypothesis can be rejected at the 1% level of significance in both cases. This means that a significant negative correlation exists between social isolation and pupils of autonomous parents. In the case of primary school pupils, there is a high

negative correlation, while in the case of secondary school pupils, a moderate negative correlation exists between social isolation and pupils of autonomous parents.

There is a stronger association between social isolation and parental autonomy of primary school pupils. The possible explanation for this could be that, in general, parents are not according much opportunities for younger children to participate in important decision making than older children. However, those who enjoy autonomy benefit socially. They seem to develop superior social skills due to their autonomous behaviour compared to children who lack autonomy. With regard to the latter parents of primary school children, they may still be playing a major role in decision making processes because these parents believe that their children may still be too young to think rationally and make social decisions. It can therefore be expected for a stronger relationship to exist between the level of parental autonomy and social isolation for primary school pupils than for secondary school pupils.

The results of this study are similar to that of Fogel and Melson (1998:437) and Steinberg et al (1991:502) who concluded that parents who encourage autonomy among their children have children who are less socially isolated than children of autocratic type of parents. According to Gecas and Schwalbe (1986:38), the extent to which parents grant autonomy to their children, has a positive consequence for self-efficacy. Freedom from parental constraint gives the child greater opportunity to explore the world and engage in competence-developing activities, thus enhancing his or her sense of efficacy. It also suggests to the child that the parent trusts the child and considers him or her to be a responsible person. This has favourable consequences for the child's self-esteem. With a strong self-esteem, the child is more confident and can easily relate to others in social situations. Such a child is less likely to be socially isolated. With regard to autocratic parents, they restrict this development of self-efficacy in their children. The results is a poor self-esteem which negatively affects the child's relationship with others.

#### **TESTING OF HYPOTHESIS 12 (d)**

In relation to the testing of Hypothesis 12 (d), as stated in paragraph 6.2.12, the following null hypothesis was formulated for both primary and secondary school pupils:

***THERE IS NO SIGNIFICANT POSITIVE CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND FAMILY CONFLICT.***

Family conflict is an indication of the perceived levels of fighting and discord within the family (refer paragraph 6.2.12).

To test this hypothesis, 179 primary and 180 secondary school pupils were used. The Pearson-Product Moment correlation was used to ascertain if a significant positive correlation existed. The results of the test are recorded in Table 7.23.

**TABLE 7.23 CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AND PUPILS FROM CONFLICT RIDDEN FAMILIES**

CONFLICT RIDDEN FAMILIES		
SOCIAL ISOLATION	$r = 0,63$ $p < 0,01$	PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS
SOCIAL ISOLATION	$r = 0,40$ $p < 0,01$	SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS

Taking the results of Table 7.23 into account, the null hypothesis can be rejected at the 1% level of confidence. In the case of primary school pupils there is a high positive correlation ( $r = 0,63$ ), while in the case of secondary school pupils a moderate positive correlation ( $r = 0,40$ ) exists between social isolation and pupils from conflict ridden families. There is a stronger association between family conflict and social isolation for primary school pupils. A possible explanation for this, could be that, primary school pupils are younger and family conflict has a greater negative effect on their general well-being than for secondary school pupils. Also, primary school pupils are younger and not equipped with the coping mechanisms to deal effectively with family conflict and therefore they may become easily emotionally disturbed. Thus it can be expected that a stronger association may exist between social isolation and family conflict for primary school children.

From the results, it would imply that, the greater the family conflict, the greater the chances are of pupils being socially isolated. Primary school children are affected to a greater extent than secondary school pupils because they are more dependent on the family compared to secondary school pupils. The level of cognitive and affective development of primary school pupils is also not as advanced as that of secondary school pupils, therefore, they may be unable to understand and deal with family conflict adequately. This makes them more vulnerable to become psychologically affected and are therefore at a greater risk of being socially isolated. These findings concur with the research findings of Mann (1989:274), Rice (1992:107) and Mussen et al (1990:435) who found that marital conflict and parent-adolescent conflict affects family cohesion which in turn has an effect on the social development of the child. Children from such homes are more likely to display anti-social behaviour which increases their risk of being rejected.

#### **7.14 TESTING HYPOTHESIS 13**

In relation to Hypothesis 13, stated in paragraph 6.2.13, the following null hypothesis was tested:

***THERE IS NO SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN THE AVERAGE SOCIAL ISOLATION OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS AND SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS.***

The subjects were divided into 4 groups according to their grades, namely, Grade 6, 7, 10 and 11.

The F-test was used to determine whether there is a significant difference between the average social isolation of pupils in the different grades.

The average social isolation for each of the four groups was calculated. In order to compare these averages, an analysis of variance was carried out. The results appear in Table 7.24.



**TABLE 7.24 RESULTS OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF SOCIAL ISOLATION OF PUPILS IN DIFFERENT GRADES**

GRADES	NO.	MEAN	S.D.
6	89	31,08	12,30
7	90	28,29	10,13
10	90	27,38	9,87
11	90	26,02	10,28

$$F(3,355) = 3,60 \quad p < 0,01$$

There is a significant difference between the average social isolation of the four groups. The null hypothesis can therefore be rejected at the 1% level of significance.

In order to determine between which groups these differences exist, t-values were calculated. These appear in Table 7.25.

**TABLE 7.25 T-TEST ANALYSIS OF THE VARIANCE OF SOCIAL ISOLATION IN RELATION TO PUPILS' GRADES**

GRADES	DIFFERENCE BET.THE MEANS	t - value	SIGNIFICANCE
6 - 7	2,79	$t < 2,65$	$p > 0,05$
6 - 10	3,70	$t < 2,65$	$p > 0,05$
6 - 11	5,06	$t > 2,65$	$p < 0,05$
7 - 10	0,91	$t < 2,65$	$p > 0,05$
7 - 11	2,27	$t < 2,65$	$p > 0,05$
10 - 11	1,35	$t < 2,65$	$p > 0,05$

The results indicate that the average social isolation differs significantly between Grade 6 and 11 pupils. Therefore, it can be concluded that a difference in the average social isolation exists between primary and secondary school pupils, especially between Grades 6 and 11 pupils.

Grade 6 pupils experience more social isolation probably because their level of social development is not as advanced as compared to Grade 11 pupils. Taking into account the age difference of approximately 4 years between Grade 6 and 11 pupils, it would seem that, Grade 11 pupils have had more opportunities to develop social skills and become socially competent than Grade 6 pupils. Therefore, with their limited level of social development, it is understandable that Grade 6 pupils could experience more social isolation as compared to pupils in higher grades.

#### **7.15 TESTING HYPOTHESIS 14**

With reference to testing Hypothesis 14, as stated in paragraph 6.2.13, the following null hypothesis was formulated:

***THERE IS NO SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN THE AVERAGE SOCIAL ISOLATION OF MALE AND FEMALE PUPILS.***

This hypothesis was stated for both primary and secondary school pupils.

To ascertain whether significant differences in isolation existed between male and female pupils, 179 primary and 180 secondary school pupils were used. The results are reported in Tables 7.26 and 7.27.

**TABLE 7.26 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE AVERAGE SOCIAL ISOLATION SCORES BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS**

VARIABLE	GROUP	NO.	MEAN	S	T	D.F.	P
GENDER	1	89	31,22	11,26			
	2	90	28,20	11,23	1,79	177	P>0,05

Group 1 consisted of 89 male pupils while Group 2 consisted of 90 female pupils. According to Table 7.26 , a t-value of 1,79 was obtained with  $p > 0,05$ . The results reveal that there is no significant difference between the means. Therefore, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. This means that primary school girls do not differ from primary school boys with regard to social isolation.

**TABLE 7.27 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE AVERAGE SOCIAL ISOLATION SCORES BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS**

VARIABLE	GROUP	NO.	MEAN	S	T	D.F.	P
GENDER	1	90	26,81	10,31			
	2	90	26,55	9,88	0,17	178	p>0,05

According to Table 7.27, Group 1 consisted of 90 male while Group 2 consisted of 90 female pupils. A t-value of 0,17 was obtained with  $p > 0,05$ . The results reveal that there is no significant difference between the means. Therefore, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. This means that secondary school girls do not differ from secondary school boys with regard to social isolation.

Comparing the results of primary and secondary school pupils, it can be deduced that gender does not affect social isolation.

## 7.16 TESTING HYPOTHESIS 15

For Hypothesis 15, stated in paragraph 6.2.13, the following null hypothesis was tested:

***THERE IS NO SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN THE AVERAGE ISOLATION OF CHILDREN WITH A DIFFERENT BIRTH ORDER STATUS.***

In order to ascertain whether significant differences existed between children with a different birth order status, both primary and secondary school pupils were divided into the following four groups:

Group 1 - Youngest Born

Group 2 - Eldest Born

Group 3 - Middle Born

Group 4 - Only Born

The F-test was used to determine whether there is a significant difference between the average social isolation of the pupils in the different groups.

### **7.16.1 Comparison between the four groups of primary school pupils with regard to social isolation.**

The average social scores for each of the four groups was calculated. In order to compare these averages, an analysis of variance was carried out. The results appear in Table 7.28.

**TABLE 7.28 RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF SOCIAL ISOLATION OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS IN RELATION TO BIRTH ORDER STATUS**

GROUP	NO.	MEAN	S.D.
1	57	26,58	9,58
2	57	31,02	12,41
3	57	30,44	10,50
4	8	36,75	15,93

$$F(3,175) = 2,91 \quad P > 0,05$$

There is no significant difference between the average social isolation of the four groups. The null hypothesis can therefore not be rejected. These results indicate that there is no significant difference between the average social isolation of primary school pupils with different birth order status.

#### **7.16.2 Comparison between the four groups of secondary school pupils with regard to social isolation.**

The same procedure as in paragraph 7.16.1 was used to test the hypothesis in relation to secondary school pupils. The results appear in Table 7.29.

**TABLE 7.29 RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF SOCIAL ISOLATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS IN RELATION TO BIRTH ORDER STATUS**

GROUP	NO.	MEAN	S.D.
1	56	26,95	11,63
2	68	25,60	9,24
3	50	26,76	8,48
4	6	35,83	13,35

$$F(3,176) = 1,96 \quad p > 0,05$$

Here again there is no significant difference between the average social isolation of the four groups and the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. The results are similar to that of primary school pupils, in that, there are no significant differences in the average social isolation of children with different birth order status.

#### 7.17 TESTING HYPOTHESIS 16

To test Hypothesis 16, stated in paragraph 6.2.14, a regression analysis was carried out to determine which variables explain the largest proportion of the variance in social isolation.

Social isolation was used as the dependent variable while social competence, self-esteem, psychological well-being, academic achievement, moral values, perceived physical ability, language, physical disability, sports participation, physical attractiveness, marital status, grade, gender, birth order status, family supervision, family acceptance, family autonomy granting and family conflict were used as predictor variables.

In Tables 7.30 and 7.31  $R^2$  indicates the proportion of the variance of social isolation that can be explained by the predictor variables in the case of primary and secondary school pupils.

**TABLE 7.30 PROPORTION OF THE VARIANCE OF SOCIAL ISOLATION EXPLAINED BY CERTAIN PREDICTOR VARIABLES IN THE CASE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS**

VARIABLE	$R^2$	F	D.F.	P
SELF-ESTEEM	0,653	333,83	1,177	$P < 0,01$
OBEDIENCE	0,727	234,65	2,176	$P < 0,01$
SOCIAL COMPETENCE	0,754	178,81	3,175	$P < 0,01$

Step 1. *Self-esteem* was included and it explained the largest proportion of the variance in social isolation in primary school pupils, namely, 65,3%.  $R^2$  is significant with  $F(1,177) = 333,83$ ;  $p < 0,01$ .

Step 2. *Obedience* as a moral value was included.  $R^2$  changed from 0,653 to 0,727, which implies that 72,7% of the variance of social isolation in primary school pupils is explained by self-esteem and obedience. The  $R^2$  of 0,727 is significant with  $F(2,176) = 234,65$  ;  $p < 0,01$ .

In Step 3. *Social Competence* was included.  $R^2$  changed from 0,727 to 0,754, which implies that 75,4% of the variance of social isolation in primary school pupils is explained by self-esteem, obedience and social competence. The  $R^2$  of 0,754 is significant with  $F(3,175) = 178,81$  ;  $p < 0,01$ . No other variable could explain a significantly larger proportion of the variance already explained by the previous variables. One could therefore say, that with regard to social isolation among primary school pupils, self-esteem, obedience and social competence explain more or less 75,4% of the variance of social isolation.

**TABLE 7.31 PROPORTION OF THE VARIANCE OF SOCIAL ISOLATION EXPLAINED BY CERTAIN PREDICTOR VARIABLES IN THE CASE OF ADOLESCENTS**

VARIABLE	$R^2$	F	D.F.	P
SOCIAL COMPETENCE	0,0574	239,47	1,178	$P < 0,01$
FAMILY SUPERVISION	0,645	160,95	2,177	$P < 0,01$
SELF-ESTEEM	0,683	126,82	3,176	$P < 0,01$

Similar procedures were followed to that of the primary school pupils. In the case of adolescents, *social competence* explained 57,4% of the variance in social isolation.  $R^2$  of 0,574 is significant with  $F(1,178) = 239,47$  ;  $p < 0,01$ .

When *Family Supervision* was included  $R^2$  changed from 0,574 to 0,645.  $R^2$  of 0,645 is significant with  $F(2,177) = 160,95$  ;  $p < 0,01$ . This means that social competence and family supervision explain 64,5% of the variance of social isolation.

When *self-esteem* was included,  $R^2$  changed from 0,645 to 0,683.  $R^2$  of 0,683 is significant with  $F(3,176) = 126,82$ ;  $p < 0,01$ . No other variable could explain a significantly larger proportion of the variance already explained by the previous variables. This means that, social competence, family supervision and self-esteem explain more or less 68,3% of the variance in social isolation among adolescents.

Comparing the results of the regression analysis of primary and secondary school pupils, it can be deduced that social competence and self-esteem are common predictor variables that explain the largest proportion of the variance in social isolation for both groups. With regard to social competence, the present findings concur with those of Sears et al (1991:292), Wentzel et al (1993:819) and Balk (1995:283) who found that a lack of social competence is the key factor contributing to social isolation. In the case of self-esteem, the present findings replicate those of Sears et al (1991:292), Page (1992:150) and Hartup (1993:12) who noted that the type of self-esteem a person has, plays a significant role in determining whether or not the person could become socially isolated.

## 7.18 CONCLUSION

The present chapter looked at the statistical processing and interpretation of the data. From the results obtained, certain significant findings were noted. The findings in terms of relationships (correlations) and differences between the various variables and social isolation are summarised below.



**TABLE 7.32 CORRELATION BETWEEN CERTAIN VARIABLES AND SOCIAL ISOLATION**

<b>VARIABLE</b>	<b>PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS</b>	<b>SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS</b>
1. Social Competence	High (-0,79)	High (-0,76)
2. Self-esteem	High (-0,81)	High (-0,74)
3. Psychological Well-being	High (-0,62)	Low (-0,37)
4. Academic Achievement	Moderate (-0,54)	Low (-0,35)
5. Perceived Physical Ability	High (-0,62)	Moderate (-0,47)
6. Perceived Physical Attractiveness	High (-0,60)	Moderate (-0,45)
7. Parental Supervision	High (-0,60)	High (-0,51)
8. Parental Acceptance	High (-0,68)	High (-0,60)
9. Parental Autonomy Granting	High (-0,65)	Moderate (-0,53)
10. Parental Conflict	High (0,63)	Moderate (0,40)
11. Moral Values	High (Obedience/ Self-respect/ Knowledge)	High (Friendship/ Responsibility/ Peace -Harmony)

**TABLE 7.33 SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES IN SOCIAL ISOLATION WITH RESPECT TO CERTAIN VARIABLES**

<b>VARIABLE</b>	<b>PRIMARY SCHOOL</b>	<b>SECONDARY SCHOOL</b>
11. Physical Disability	Exists	Exists
12. Sports Participation	Exists	Exists
13. Language (Same/different as medium of instruction at school)	Exists	Exists
14. Birth Order	None	None
15. Marital Status of Parents	Exists	Exists
16. Grade	Exists	Exists
17. Gender	None	None

The variable that explained the largest proportion of the variance in social isolation among primary school pupils was self-esteem, namely 65,3%, followed by obedience and social competence. In the case of adolescents, social competence explained the largest proportion of the variance of social isolation, namely, 57,4%, followed by family supervision and self-esteem. The two most common variables are social competence and self-esteem.

The following chapter would involve the educational implications of the literature and empirical findings, evaluation of the research and suggestions for future research.

## **Educational implications of the study and suggestions for future research.**

### **8.1 INTRODUCTION**

As stated in chapter 1, children who are socially isolated could be subject to cognitive, affective, moral, social and personality developmental restraints. It was therefore the purpose of this study to determine what factors contributed to the onset and development of social isolation among primary and secondary school learners.

A literature study was done to identify the possible factors that contribute to social isolation among primary and secondary school learners. Among of the factors identified in the literature study are social competence, self-esteem, psychological well-being, academic achievement, intelligence, perceived physical ability, physical disability, sports participation, self-perceived physical attractiveness, moral values, marital status of parents, parental supervision, parental acceptance, parental autonomy granting and parental conflict.

An empirical investigation was carried out to determine which were the most important factors relating to social isolation in the primary and secondary school learners. A regression analysis revealed that the variables that accounted for the largest proportion of the variance in social isolation in the case of primary school learners were self-esteem, followed by obedience and social competence. In the case of adolescents, social competence accounted for the largest proportion of the variance in social isolation, followed by family supervision and self-esteem.

Since these factors can be considered the most important factors in the development of social isolation, the educational implications of each will be discussed.

From the results it also becomes evident that social competence and self-esteem are common factors in social isolation for both primary and secondary school learners. These findings suggest

that if learners' self-esteem and social competence are developed in the primary school stage, there is little risk of these learners becoming social isolates in the secondary school phase.

Psychological well-being, academic achievement, perceived physical ability, perceived physical attractiveness, parental acceptance, parental autonomy granting, parental conflict, moral values, physical disability, sports participation and parents' marital status seem to be less important for the development of social isolation among learners. However, that does not mean that these factors can be ignored. The educational implications of these factors will also be discussed briefly.

At the end of this chapter an evaluation of the study and recommendations for future research will be given.

## **8.2 EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE FACTORS THAT ACCOUNT FOR THE LARGEST PROPORTION OF THE VARIANCE IN SOCIAL ISOLATION AMONG PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS**

### **8.2.1 Self-esteem in the case of primary and secondary school learners**

From the literature study on theories of social development (see sections 3.4 and 5.2), it is evident that the type of self-esteem learners develop play a decisive role in determining whether or not they are at risk of becoming social isolates.

Briefly, the humanistic theory ( see section 3.4.2) stresses that when learners are treated with concern and approval, this could lead to the development of a high self-esteem, while if they are rejected and criticised, this could lead to the development of a poor self-esteem. Erikson's psychosocial (see sections 2.6.1, 3.4.3 and 4.7.1) and Rogers' theory (sections 2.6.2 and 4.7.2) also place great emphasis on the type of self-esteem learners develop in relation to social isolation.

With regard to primary school learners, both Rogers and Erikson emphasise the type of self-esteem learners develop in relation to their experience of mastery and failure in social settings.

Failure in tasks and social settings leads to the development of a negative social self-esteem, which leads to withdrawal from social interaction.

With regard to the adolescent, Erikson's theory focuses on the need for adolescents to resolve the conflict between identity and identity confusion in order to become unique adults with a definite role in life. During this stage of psychological development, adolescents seek to determine their own sense of self (identity), including the role they will play in society. Failure to establish a sense of self (identity) could lead to identity confusion and a lowered self-esteem. Rogers also stresses that constant failure in activities and the experience of negatively perceived problems, such as parental separation and physical disability, also lead to the development of a negative self-esteem.

Therefore, if the principles of the humanistic, Erikson's and Rogers' theories are taken into account, it is imperative for both teachers and parents to ensure the development of a strong and positive self-esteem in both primary and secondary school learners to prevent them from becoming social isolates.

Self-esteem is a common factor that accounts for a large proportion of the variance in social isolation in both primary and secondary school learners. This implies that parents and teachers should try to ensure the development of a strong self-esteem from an early age, thus equipping learners to enter adolescence with an advantage to overcome social isolation.

Teachers and parents should initially try to develop learners' general self-esteem first and then aspects or activities that contribute to the development of a positive social self-esteem.

The development of a positive general self-esteem for both primary and secondary school learners can be achieved through implementing the following measures:

- **Help learners develop a sense of worth and self-confidence.** This can be done by recognising and praising learners when they carry out certain tasks successfully either in or outside the classroom or at home. When adults encourage children's efforts, they support children's sense of industry. According to Gecas and Schwalbe (1986:38), parental behaviour that indicates positive evaluation of children, such as support,

participation and interest in them, positively relates to children's self-esteem. The main effect of parental support, interest and participation is that it conveys information about children's inherent worth to them.

- **Praise learners when they excel and show an improvement in academic work.** They should not be reprimanded when they perform poorly, but instead encouraged to try harder.
- **Praise learners when they excel in sports.** Learners who participate in a sporting activity for the first time should be complimented. Those who are reluctant to participate should be encouraged to take part.
- **Tasks and activities should be designed to take learners' level of cognitive development into account.** Weak learners should be given less cognitively demanding tasks so that they can experience some success in whatever they do. This would avoid the experience of continual failure which could lead to the formation of a negative self-esteem.
- **Teachers should design group activities so that each group has an equal number of bright and weak learners.** This will allow the group as a whole to experience success. This experience of success will help build the self-esteem of weak learners who normally experience failure in completing academic tasks.
- **Adolescents with confused identities should be helped to develop a sense of self-identity.** This can be done by creating opportunities for adolescents to meet and listen to people and role models with achieved identities. Also, parents and teachers should be sensitive to the problems adolescents are encountering and try to assist them in resolving them.
- **Parents should grant autonomy to adolescents.** According to Gecas and Schwalbe (1986:38), the extent to which parents grant autonomy to their adolescent offspring should also have positive consequences for adolescent self-esteem, especially for self-efficacy.

Freedom from parental constraint gives children greater opportunity to explore the world and engage in competence-developing activities, thus enhancing their sense of efficacy. It also suggests to the child that the parent trusts the child and considers him or her to be a responsible person. This too has favourable consequences for the child's self-esteem.

- **Teachers should use nurturing strategies.** Barkley (1989:45) lists nine nurturing strategies which teachers can use for raising adolescent learners' self-esteem:
  - Compliment students for positive attitudes, efforts and behaviour.
  - Allow each student to experience success.
  - Model positive, encouraging behaviour.
  - Clarify direction, rules and expectations.
  - Be interested in and listen to what students say.
  - Reward students for their efforts and accomplishments.
  - Accept students as human beings.
  - Counsel or serve as a mentor to students.
  - Teachers should model their own high self-esteem.

These nurturing strategies to develop learners' self-esteem can also be used by primary school teachers and parents.

The development of a positive **social self-esteem** can be enhanced by adopting the following guidelines:

- **Reward and praise learners when they display prosocial behaviours** such as helping a friend, sharing certain things and showing concern for a friend's problem.
- **Praise learners in a group when a group project has been successfully completed.** Each learner in the group should be made to feel that his/her contribution to the project has been noted. According to Bergstrom (1994:48), by allowing children to finish their work and praise their efforts, adults enhance children's natural inclination to take pride in their activity and accomplishments as they work to achieve a group goal.

- **When arranging learners for group work, teachers should pair off socially competent learners with social isolates.** This will encourage social isolates to communicate and respond to social stimuli (such as greetings, conversing and sharing ideas) initiated by socially competent learners. Gradually these social isolates will develop a sense of competence in relating to others and be able to transfer this experiences to new situations. This will eventually facilitate a progressive development of a positive self-esteem.
- **Teachers should also design physical education lessons and sporting activities taking learners' physical ability into account.** Learners should be placed in groups where all have similar physical abilities thereby avoiding a situation where a physically less capable learner is ridiculed and laughed at for not coping with the given activity.
- **Apply the principle of reinforcement** in the case of social isolates who are rejected because of their unsociable behaviour patterns, such as aggression. Reward these children every time they display socially accepted behaviours within a group (such as helping, playing without fighting) so that they sustain this type of acceptable behaviour pattern and are liked and accepted by their peers. This will eventually lead to the development of a positive social self-esteem.

### **8.2.2 Social competence in the case of primary and secondary school learners**

As mentioned, social competence accounted for a large proportion of the variance in social isolation for both primary and secondary school learners. From the literature study it is evident that social competence is determined by the type of social self-concept and range of social skills children have.

Learners' social competence can be improved through social skills training. The following are some ways of accomplishing this:



- **Create opportunities for observational learning.**  
Observation enables people to learn appropriate social behaviour, attitudes and emotions vicariously. Models can be parents, siblings, relatives, friends, teachers and coaches. Exposure to a model can help withdrawn and rejected children learn prosocial behaviour.
- **Role playing** can also be useful in that it increases the awareness of how it feels to be someone else. This would encourage social isolates to emerge from their "solitary world" and experience the outside world. This could be achieved through dramatic and imaginative play involving taking the roles of others.
- Since learners learn attitudes by observing teacher models, **teachers should be responsive, democratic and display high social interactive behaviours** in the classroom. Teachers who are autocratic, insensitive, domineering, unsociable and demanding do not provide good models for learners to emulate.
- Teachers should **get learners to model prosocial behaviours** during life skills lessons which is part of the new curriculum, *Curriculum 2005*. Withdrawn and rejected children may learn prosocial behaviour from watching a model who displays such prosocial behaviour. Also, aggressive-rejected children may inhibit socially undesirable behaviour patterns after being exposed to a display of prosocial behaviour.
- Parents must **inculcate** in their children **socially approved skills and behaviour from an early age**. Praise children who display prosocial behaviours (such as asking for things and saying "thank you" instead of grabbing; helping others, being unselfish and helpful). Children who display unsociable behaviours should be reprimanded so as to eliminate these undesirable behaviours from an early age.
- **Provide opportunities for social interactions through play.** This can be achieved by pairing off social isolates with socially skilled playmates. Such an action may assist social isolates to indirectly learn some of the social skills of the socially competent playmates.

- According to Luckner et al (1994:6), families and educators may need to **provide direct instruction in appropriate behaviours through discussion, modelling and role-playing**. Students should be encouraged to talk about specific actions they might take in response to real-life situations, including:
  - **Developing positive interaction.** Point out that individuals who are positive, attentive, approving, encouraging and interesting are more likely to attract friends than ones who are apathetic, moody and self centred.
  - **Finding areas of compatibility.** Students need to understand the importance of expressing interest in others' concerns and experiences as well as their own.
  - **Empathizing with others.** Learning to be understanding of and sensitive to the concerns and feelings of others is an essential skill for building friendships.
  - **Sharing and providing support.** Students need to learn to help, support and share with others, particularly in times of need.
  - **Building trustworthiness and loyalty.** Discuss the importance of being honest and loyal with friends. Help students understand these concepts and the specific behaviours they require.
  - **Developing skills for conflict resolution.** Learning to protect their own interest without being either submissive or aggressive is a challenge for most students.

Adalbjarnardottir (1994:409) also notes that classroom discussion on interpersonal relationships and conflict resolution is a constructive strategy in promoting children's social growth. Presenting learners with hypothetical interpersonal conflicts and asking them to discuss various possible solutions and their consequences will enable children to provide various alternatives during interpersonal dilemmas which they may experience.

From the foregoing, it is evident that social skills training is an intervention designed to improve the behaviours which predict socially valid outcomes. Social skills are learned behaviours and can therefore be taught, using structured teaching methods. Ogilvy (1994:77) summarises the four main approaches to social skills training as follows:

- contingency management
- modelling
- coaching
- cognitive problem solving

**Contingency management** relies on the behaviouristic principle of using contingencies to shape behaviour, reinforcing desirable behaviours while ignoring undesirable ones. This cannot be used to teach a new skill, only to encourage the performance of an existing skill.

**Modelling** derives from social learning theory and can be used to teach new skills and to enhance existing social competencies. Both modelling and contingency management teach inductively, letting the child infer the principles of effective social interaction from a number of reinforced or demonstrated behaviours.

**Coaching** teaches deductively. The principles of effective social interaction are explicitly provided in the form of rules or instructions, with behavioural examples and the child is expected to use these general principles to generate appropriate social behaviour. Feedback and further coaching are given when necessary.

**Cognitive problem solving** is based on teaching interpersonal cognitive problem-solving skills, otherwise known as social problem-solving skills. This approach is similar to coaching in that both assume that cognitions mediate social behaviour. Interpersonal cognitive problem-solving differs from coaching in that it focuses on training thinking processes rather than on teaching specific content. It emphasises the need for children to be able to identify difficult situations, to generate a range of possible responses to predict the likely outcomes of each alternative and then to select the response most likely to lead to a successful outcome. This technique is usually part of

preventive social curricular packages and can be used with a whole class. The aim is to teach children a set of coping or "life skills" which will generalise across a range of everyday situations.

### 8.2.3 Obedience in the case of primary school children

The value **obedience**, which is a component of morality, accounted for a large proportion of the variance in social isolation. Taking into account Piaget, Kohlberg and Selman's theories (see section 2.5), it is evident that there is a reciprocal relationship between moral development and social isolation. Learners who do not conform to the moral code of a group could be rejected. Also, being socially isolated restricts people's moral development. There is a need for peer interaction in order for moral development to take place.

The following guidelines are proposed to help both teachers and parents facilitate learners' moral development:

- Afford pupils opportunities to work and play in groups where they learn to get along with others, make up rules, arbitrate among themselves and take into account each other's shortcomings and intentions. By doing this, learners learn to accept and obey rules devised by themselves.
- Present learners with moral dilemmas for discussion during life skills lessons. Here learners will come to understand that there are various alternatives to such dilemmas. This will help to broaden their level of moral understanding and enable them to use the various alternatives in moral dilemmas in real-life situations rather than sticking to their restrictive thoughts and ideas.
- Dramatise "role-taking" where learners assume the role of other people. Here learners get an opportunity to imagine and feel how others do during a moral conflict. Experiencing the uncomfortable feeling a victim feels will teach learners not to subject others to similar situations.

- Both parents and teachers should reward or praise children when they display obedience to socially approved roles in social situations. Children should become aware of the consequences of disobeying socially moral codes of conduct, for example, one such consequence could be rejection.
- The four approaches to social skills training (contingency management, modelling, coaching and cognitive problem solving) (see section 8.2.2) can also be used successfully in facilitating moral development in primary school children.

Briefly, **contingency management** can be used to reinforce desirable moral codes of behaviour, such as obedience or ignoring undesirable behaviour like selfishness. **Modelling** could be used to demonstrate the consequences of being morally upright. Learners can watch a sketch or play to see the good that comes from being honest, loyal, respectful and obedient. **Coaching** can involve setting up a socially approved moral code of conduct which involves values like obedience, respectfulness and honesty in the classroom. Learners are immediately made aware when they transgress any of these rules and ways of correcting such immoral behaviours are discussed with them. **Cognitive problem solving** can be used to get learners to generate a number of alternatives to resolve more dilemmas. Such divergent thinking will help learners to select the best alternative when faced with a moral dilemma, such as what to do when they need something desperately and don't have the means to acquire it.

Although the value of obedience has not accounted for a significant proportion of the variance of social isolation among adolescents, this does not mean that moral values do not relate to adolescent social isolation. According to the literature study, the level of moral development is related to social isolation among both adolescents and primary school children, therefore the guidelines listed above are also applicable to adolescents.

#### 8.2.4 Parental supervision among adolescents

The empirical findings show that parental supervision accounted for a large proportion of the variance in social isolation among adolescents. From the literature study (see sections 3.5.1 and 5.8) it is clear that variations in parental behaviour have a marked effect on both primary school children and adolescents' socialisation process. Through various interactions with family members, children develop patterns for establishing relationships with others. These patterns are expressed and further developed in relationships with peers, authority figures and co-workers.

The literature study also stresses that the way parents supervise their children affects their social development. Conger (1991:599) and Steinberg et al (1991:502) note that teenagers of authoritative and democratic parents tend to be confident, flexible, creative, curious and socially skilled. Those with authoritarian and autocratic parents are more dependent, passive and less socially adept. Laissez-faire and neglecting parents seem to produce adolescents who are immature, irresponsible and overly conforming.

The following guidelines will enable parents to ensure that their style of parenting is conducive to the healthy social development of children.

- **Encourage democratic decision making in the home.** Participatory decision making should allow for children's input. This will avoid adolescents from becoming rebellious and consequently minimise parent-adolescent conflict. Giving children an opportunity for decision making accords them a sense of worth which is ideal for their development of a healthy self-esteem.
- **Create a warm and accepting environment at home.** Occasionally ask children how they are doing in general and also how they are doing in school. This will make children feel wanted and not neglected.
- **Always be alert and advise children when they are heading in the wrong direction,** for example, joining friends who take drugs. Here parents must talk to their children of the possible consequences of joining such friends. Parents should also monitor the type

of films or TV programmes their children watch. Programmes with age restrictions should not be watched by minors as this could have a damaging effect on their moral development.

- **Avoid being too permissive** as this will create an impression that adolescents can "do as they please". Even though adolescents are given a say in decision making, this process must be monitored to prevent them from taking decisions which could be to their detriment. For example, adolescents may be influenced by their friends to go on an overnight party just before the examinations. Here parents need to advise and counsel them that they are not acting responsibly.
- **Avoid coercive disciplining.** Parents should work out disciplinary rules and a code of conduct in collaboration with adolescents. This will bring about an understanding between parents and children where children will become aware of the type of behaviour and discipline that is expected of them. This will also prevent parents from implementing an erratic type of discipline.
- **Avoid continual arguments or discussing conflicts in the children's presence** as this does not provide suitable models to emulate. The literature study shows that the type of behaviour and relationship children experience at home is the type of behaviour they will display outside the home. Therefore when children become accustomed to family conflict at home, they might just be inclined to become involved with similar types of conflict with friends, which might cause them to be rejected.

Although family supervision was found to be one of the factors that accounted for a large proportion of the variance in social isolation among adolescents, the guidelines provided are also significant for primary school learners. Since the family is regarded as the pre-eminent socialisation context within which the child's earliest experience occurs, the implementation of appropriate styles of parenting from an early age will prevent the emergence of parent-child conflicts during the adolescent period of development.

### **8.3 EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF OTHER IMPORTANT FACTORS RELATED TO SOCIAL ISOLATION AMONG PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL CHILDREN**

#### **8.3.1 Psychological well-being**

The literature study and the empirical investigation reveal that there is a significant negative correlation between the psychological well-being of primary and secondary school children and social isolation. The healthier the emotional state of learners, the less socially isolated they seem to be. This implies that teachers and parents should ensure that learners under their control are not subjected to situations that negatively affect their psychological well-being. Below follow guidelines to achieve this.

- Learners who perform poorly in academic tasks should not be constantly reprimanded by teachers and parents as this tends to lead to anxiety and stress. They should instead be encouraged to do better. Remedial teaching should be done by teachers wherever possible to enable these learners to cope.
- Continual failure in school can cause emotional maladjustment. Teachers should carefully match the children's learning tasks with their abilities to ensure success. This will result in an increase in children's self-respect and confidence, which eventually will lead to an improvement in their general adjustment. Teachers should also identify learners' problem areas and help them overcome these. Some sort of remedial programme should be implemented to help weak learners cope with the academic work.
- A standard of work that is beyond their ability is depressing for such learners. According to Sharp (1975:85), teachers should look out for any children who seem unhappy, depressed or lacking in concentration, and try to discover the cause of such behaviour. Teachers should attempt to lessen the anxiety for children who become over-anxious about their work. This may mean giving them extra help or lessening the demands made on them.



- Sporting activities should be structured so that children with different physical abilities are catered for. Ignoring learners because they are obese can affect their psychological well-being.
- Learners who display acting out behaviours, such as aggression, should be constantly monitored by teachers and parents. When such learners display prosocial behaviours, they should be praised and rewarded to reinforce such behaviour. Simple rewards should be given for behaving acceptably but may be withdrawn if conduct deteriorates.
- Role playing, where aggressive children take the part of the victims and experience the feelings of hostility and assault, may in future make them reconsider displaying such aggressive acts in real-life situations.
- Children moving into a new neighbourhood and school should be made to feel accepted. This will enable them to adapt to the changed environment with little stress and anxiety.
- Children who have suffered a loss in the family should be comforted and supported during their period of stress and trauma.
- Parents should not set too high goals for their children to achieve. If the expectations are too high and beyond the children's capabilities they become unrealistic and subjects the children to undue anxiety and stress.
- Teachers and parents should ensure that children don't ridicule or make fun of other children with physical defects as this could embarrass these people and cause them to become withdrawn.
- Parents should provide a warm and accepting home environment which will provide children with some sense of security. A sense of security relates to people's psychological well-being.

- When parents are going through a divorce, both parents should talk to the children and help them cope with this traumatic period. Children should also be made to feel that they are not the cause of the divorce. According to the literature study(see section 3.5.1), children of divorcing parents sometimes see themselves as the cause of their parents' divorce and become depressed.

### **8.3.2 Academic achievement**

The literature study and the empirical research show that learners' academic achievement is related to social isolation. Learners who perform well are more confident and have higher sociometric status among peers. Learners who perform poorly in school are at greater risk of becoming social isolates. The implication of this is that teachers and parents should ensure that children experience some success in academic activities. The following guidelines may prove useful:

- Teachers should change their teaching methods from the old "chalk and talk" method to a more pragmatic type of teaching and learning as emphasised in the new outcomes- based education. Self-discovery while working in groups will be more stimulating for learners since knowledge is acquired in a pragmatic way rather than by rote learning. Assessment of learners should also be done practically rather than by written tests. This type of teaching and assessment will assist the weaker learners to attain some degree of success.
- If written tests are given, then careful planning is needed where the cognitive ability of all learners is taken into account. Tests must be designed in such a way that the weakest of learners should be able to attain the minimum pass mark. Attainment of some degree of success will intrinsically motivate these learners to continue to work and produce good results.
- Teachers and parents must praise and reward children who make significant progress. This will motivate the learners to do better next time.
- Parents must encourage their children to do well at school by providing incentives, such as going on a camp or holiday if they do well at school. This will encourage children to

give of their best in order to obtain these rewards. It is important to vary the rewards so there is always an element of anticipation and surprise. If the same type of reward is given every time, it might lose its effectiveness.

- Teachers could provide extra tuition for learners who are not coping very well at school. If possible, parents who can afford to pay for extra tuition should send their children to these classes.
- Parents must make sure that children are given enough time and space at home to do homework and self-study exercises.
- Parents must ensure that there is a balance between play time and study time. Rules must be made jointly to control the time learners spend on leisure activities and study otherwise learners, if not controlled, will spend more time watching TV and playing computer games than on studying. This type of scenario could be one of the major causes of learners performing poorly in school.
- Parents should show interest in their children's school performance by attending parents' meetings organised by the school to discuss children's progress. This will give learners an indication that their parents are concerned about their school performance and encourage them to take greater interest in their school work.

### **8.3.3 Perceived physical ability, physical disability and sports participation**

The literature study and the empirical research show that these factors relate to social isolation. These factors will be discussed together as they are related. Learners who have a high perception of their physical ability and participate in sports are less likely to become social isolates. Learners who are physically disabled and do not participate in sports are at greater risk of becoming social isolates.

Both teachers and parents should devise ways and means of helping learners who have a negative perception of their physical ability to develop a more positive one. Once this is accomplished,

these learners will have greater confidence to participate in sports. The following guidelines may prove useful:

- Physical education lessons should be designed in such a way that learners are grouped according to their physical ability when participating in games. This will ensure that learners achieve some success in terms of competence of the game while playing with learners of similar physical ability.
- Parents and teachers should encourage and motivate children to participate in sports. They can assist learners to change their perceptions about their physical ability. Learners who are reluctant to participate in sports should be made to believe that with sufficient training and coaching they can also achieve success in sports and games.
- Parents should identify what type of sport is suitable for their children from an early age and develop their potential in it. Cognisance of the children's physique should also be taken into account, for example, obese children could be trained as discus or shot-put throwers rather than sprinters. Also, obese children could excel in cricket rather than in soccer. Teachers should also take cognisance of this and make sure that the school's sporting programme caters for the needs of all types of learners.
- Learners who are physically disabled should also be involved in sporting activities if for physical reasons they cannot participate. Such learners could for example do scoring in a volleyball match. Disabled pupils should also be involved in the organisation of cricket and volleyball matches where they could do the umpiring. Such games do not call for constant movement and therefore these learners could sit and umpire the matches. The feeling of being involved in sports even if they do not physically participate will make such learners feel wanted and not rejected.
- Teachers could spend more time coaching learners who are less competent in the various codes of sports, while the competent learners could play on their own. Parents should also take the initiative to find time to train their children during weekends. Besides developing children's sporting competence, it also helps to bring about good parent-child relationships.

#### **8.3.4 Self-perceived physical attractiveness**

The literature study and the empirical findings show that children and adolescents who perceive themselves as physically more attractive in social situations have higher social status within the group than those who perceive themselves as unattractive. Confidence in physical appearance in social settings may be related to extroversion, a significant personality trait in social relationships.

Teachers and parents need to change this perception in children. Children must understand that one does not have to be physically attractive to be successful in social relationships.

Children must be made aware that social competence and appropriate social skills contribute more to group acceptance than being physically attractive. Children who feel that they are physically unattractive and may be rejected should be made to believe that the development of good moral values, social skills and a sense of confidence can make them easily accepted.

Both teachers and parents should also impress on children who look for physical attractiveness in friends that such a perception is incorrect and that true friendship lies beyond physical attractiveness.

#### **8.3.5 Parents' marital status**

According to literature study and the empirical investigation, there is a significant difference in social isolation between learners living with both biological parents and those living with single divorced parents or grandparents/guardians. Those living with grandparents/ guardians experience greater social isolation. A close analysis of the literature study reveals that divorce itself does not cause children to become isolates, but the effects of divorce predispose them to becoming social isolates. For example, children of divorced or broken homes are usually depressed and this depression usually causes them to withdraw from friends and the peer group. Children from divorced families also do not learn appropriate prosocial behaviours at home because of the breakdown in family relationships. They sometimes display inappropriate behaviours within the peer group, which causes them to be rejected.

From this it would appear that single parents and teachers face the challenge of preventing such children from becoming social isolates. The following guidelines may prove useful:

- Teachers should identify learners whose parents are going through divorce and counsel them. The children must be made to feel that what is happening to their parents does not mean "the end of the world" for them. These children must be made aware that they can still live a successful life with the support of a single parent and friends. Providing such children with coping strategies will help prevent them becoming emotionally insecure and depressed.
- Parents who are going through a divorce should tell their children the actual cause of the divorce. This will eliminate any doubt children may have that they have contributed to their parents' divorce. These children should also be made aware of their living arrangements and frequency of contact time that they will have with the other separated parent.
- Divorced parents who have moved away should also make every effort to spend time with their children after the separation. Such children will feel a sense of security and realise that their parents still care about them.

#### **8.3.6 Home language**

The empirical investigation shows that there is a significant difference in social isolation between children whose home language is the same as the medium of instruction at school and those whose home language is different. There is, however, no previous research evidence to support this finding. One of the possible reasons for this finding could be that acceptance into a group is based on similar home language and home background. Learners from different home backgrounds are usually isolated if they are in the minority.

This implies that teachers and parents should inculcate in children that, basically, all people are equal and that colour, race and home language should not be used as criteria to select friends. Teachers can also use History lessons to discuss the cultural background and beliefs of the

different race groups. This will enable children to appreciate and respect the beliefs of others as well as get a better understanding of people who are different from them in terms of race and home language. This will also help to remove any prejudices one group of learners may have about another minority group. Hopefully, this will allow children with a different home language from that of the medium of instruction at school to be accepted by children whose home language is the same as the medium of instruction at school.

### **8.3.7 Grade**

The empirical investigation found that there was a significant difference in the incidence of social isolation between Grade 6 and Grade 11 learners. However, there were no significant differences between the other grades. There is no previous research evidence to support the present findings. From the results it would appear that primary school learners experience greater social isolation than secondary school learners. This implies that if preventative measures are taken at the junior primary level to prevent learners from becoming social isolates, the incidence of social isolation at the primary school level will be decreased. At the beginning of each academic year, previous class teachers should inform new class teachers of social isolates in their respective classes. This will ensure that preventative strategies used by the previous teachers are also implemented by the new set of teachers.

Since primary school learners are still undergoing social development, both teachers and parents should teach them social skills which will enable them to become socially competent. Here again, watching "role models" and "roleplaying" could be useful. Primary school teachers can also pair off social isolates with socially competent learners during groupwork and class activities. This will allow for social isolates to learn social skills from socially competent learners.

## **8.4 EVALUATION OF THE STUDY**

The aim of the study was to provide answers to the problem identified in chapter 1, namely, "What are the most important factors relating to social isolation among primary and secondary school learners? "

Insight was needed into the factors that influence the onset and development of social isolation among primary and secondary school learners. By identifying these factors, both parents and teachers can help these learners eliminate the obstacles that affect their self-actualisation process. As stated in chapter 1, social isolation has a negative effect on the child's cognitive, affective, moral, personality and social development.

The literature study identified numerous variables that influenced social isolation among primary and secondary school learners (see section 8.1). An empirical investigation, based on the factors identified in the literature study, was conducted to see which variables were the best predictors of social isolation. The investigation was able to disseminate certain valuable information which accounted for the development of social isolation among both primary and secondary school learners. The implications of the findings found in the literature study and in the empirical investigation were discussed with the aim of providing both educators and parents with guidelines on how to help learners overcome social isolation.

## **8.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

In the light of this study, the following recommendations for further research are made:

- The literature study showed intelligence relates to acceptance or rejection within the peer group. Unfortunately, this variable could not be tested in the study due to the absence of learners' IQ scores. Most South African classes now have learners of different race groups and there is no standardised group IQ test that is suitable for mixed groups. The only alternative was to administer individual IQ tests. Taking into account the high costs and time needed for the administration of individual IQ tests, it was decided to omit this variable. When a standardised group I.Q. test suitable for the South African population becomes available, it would be useful to determine whether intelligence relates to social isolation.
- There is a lack of research findings on home language, grade and social isolation. The present investigation did find a relationship but more research is needed to replicate and substantiate this finding.



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## **APPENDIX A**

### **QUESTIONNAIRE USED TO MEASURE THE DIFFERENT VARIABLES**

## QUESTIONNAIRE

### □ PART A : BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

NAME OF SCHOOL : ..... ALLOTTED NO:  (1-3)

1. GRADE: (06; 07; 10; 11)  (4-5)

2. GENDER: MALE = 1 FEMALE = 2  (6)

3. AGE IN YEARS ( eg. 10, 11, 12, etc )  (7-8)

4. HOME LANGUAGE : 1 = SAME AS THAT OF SCHOOL  
2 = DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF SCHOOL  (9)

5. TYPE OF PARENTS:

1 = LIVING WITH BOTH PARENTS

2 = DIVORCED PARENTS - LIVING WITH MOTHER

3 = DIVORCED PARENTS - LIVING WITH FATHER

4 = DIVORCED PARENTS - LIVING WITH GRANDPARENTS/GUARDIANS  (10)

6. BIRTH ORDER : 1 = YOUNGEST  
2 = ELDEST  
3 = MIDDLE  
4 = ONLY CHILD  (11)

7. PHYSICAL DISABILITIES : 1 = YES 2 = NONE  (12)

8. PARTICIPATION OF SPORT : 1 = YES 2 = NO  (13)

9. ACHIEVEMENT IN PREVIOUS STD. ( LEAVE BLANK)  (14-15)

10. I.Q. SCORE ( LEAVE BLANK)  (16-18)

## □ PART B

CONSIDER EACH STATEMENT BELOW AND INDICATE TO WHAT EXTENT YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH EACH ONE. USE THE FOLLOWING SCALE FOR YOUR RESPONSES

- 1 = STRONGLY AGREE**  
**2 = AGREE**  
**3 = DISAGREE**  
**4 = STRONGLY DISAGREE**

- |   |     |      |
|---|-----|------|
| 11. IT IS EASY FOR ME TO MAKE NEW FRIENDS AT SCHOOL .     | [ ] | (19) |
| 12. I LIKE TO READ .                                      | [ ] | (20) |
| 13. I HAVE NOBODY TO TALK TO IN CLASS                     | [ ] | (21) |
| 14. I AM GOOD AT WORKING WITH OTHER PUPILS MY CLASS       | [ ] | (22) |
| 15. I WATCH TV A LOT .                                    | [ ] | (23) |
| 16. IT IS HARD FOR ME TO MAKE NEW FRIENDS AT SCHOOL       | [ ] | (24) |
| 17. I LIKE SCHOOL.  | [ ] | (25) |
| 18. I HAVE LOTS OF FRIENDS IN MY CLASS                    | [ ] | (26) |
| 19. I FEEL ALONE AT SCHOOL                                | [ ] | (27) |
| 20. I CAN FIND A FRIEND WHEN I NEED ONE.                  | [ ] | (28) |
| 21. I PLAY SPORTS A LOT.                                  | [ ] | (29) |
| 22. IT'S HARD TO GET OTHER PUPILS TO LIKE ME.             | [ ] | (30) |
| 23. I LIKE SCIENCE  | [ ] | (31) |
| 24. I DON'T HAVE ANYONE TO PLAY WITH AT SCHOOL            | [ ] | (32) |
| 25. I LIKE MUSIC.   | [ ] | (33) |
| 26. I GET ALONG WITH OTHER PUPILS IN MY CLASS             | [ ] | (34) |
| 27. I FEEL LEFT OUT OF THINGS AT SCHOOL                   | [ ] | (35) |
| 28. THERE'S NOBODY I CAN GO TO WHEN I NEED HELP IN SCHOOL | [ ] | (36) |
| 29. I LIKE TO PAINT AND DRAW.                             | [ ] | (37) |
| 30. I DON'T GET ALONG WITH OTHER PUPILS IN SCHOOL.        | [ ] | (38) |
| 31. I AM LONELY AT SCHOOL                                 | [ ] | (39) |
| 32. I AM WELL LIKED BY THE OTHER PUPILS IN MY CLASS       | [ ] | (40) |
| 33. I LIKE PLAYING BOARD GAMES A LOT                      | [ ] | (41) |
| 34. I DON' HAVE ANY FRIENDS IN CLASS.                     | [ ] | (42) |

## □ PART C

HERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW YOU SEE YOURSELF AS A PERSON. HOW STRONGLY DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THESE STATEMENTS ABOUT YOURSELF? USE THE FOLLOWING SCALE FOR YOUR RESPONSES.

**1= STRONGLY AGREE**

**2= AGREE**

**3=DISAGREE**

**4=STRONGLY DISAGREE**

- |   |                          |      |
|---|--------------------------|------|
| 35. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others. | <input type="checkbox"/> | (43) |
| 36. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.                              | <input type="checkbox"/> | (44) |
| 37. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | (45) |
| 38. I am able to do things as well as most other people.                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | (46) |
| 39. I feel I do <u>not</u> have much to be proud of.                            | <input type="checkbox"/> | (47) |
| 40. I take a positive attitude toward myself.                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | (48) |
| 41. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | (49) |
| 42. I wish I could have more respect for myself.                                | <input type="checkbox"/> | (50) |
| 43. I certainly feel useless at times.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | (51) |
| 44. At times, I think I am no good at all.                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | (52) |
| 45. There is really no way I can solve some of the problems I have.             | <input type="checkbox"/> | (53) |
| 46. Sometimes I feel that I am being pushed around in life.                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | (54) |
| 47. I have little control over the things that happen to me.                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | (55) |
| 48. I can do just anything I really set my mind to.                             | <input type="checkbox"/> | (56) |
| 49. I often feel helpless in dealing with the problems of life.                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | (57) |
| 50. What happens to me in the future mostly depends on me.                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | (58) |
| 51. There is little I can do to change many of the important things in my life. | <input type="checkbox"/> | (59) |



## ☐ PART D

THIS SECTION CONTAINS QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW YOU FEEL AND HOW THINGS HAVE BEEN GOING WITH YOU. FOR EACH QUESTION CHECK THE ANSWER WHICH BEST APPLIES TO YOU AND FILL IN THE NUMBER OF YOUR RESPONSE IN THE RELEVANT BLOCKS.

52. During the past month, how have you been feeling in general?

- (1) ☐ In very good spirits.
- (2) ☐ In good spirits mostly.
- (3) ☐ I have been up and down in spirits a lot.
- (4) ☐ In low spirits mostly.

☐ (60)

53. During the past month, have you felt so sad, discouraged, hopeless or had so many problems that you wondered if anything was worthwhile?

- (1) ☐ Very much so.
- (2) ☐ Some-enough to bother me.
- (3) ☐ A little bit.
- (4) ☐ Not at all

☐ (61)

54. During the past month, have you felt you were under any strain, stress or pressure?

- (1) ☐ Almost more than I could bear or stand.
- (2) ☐ Some, more than usual.
- (3) ☐ Some, but about usual.
- (4) ☐ Not at all.

☐ (62)

55. During the past month, how satisfied have you been with your personal life?

- (1) ☐ Very satisfied
- (2) ☐ Somewhat satisfied.
- (3) ☐ Somewhat dissatisfied.
- (4) ☐ Very dissatisfied.

☐ (63)

56. During the past month, have you been anxious, worried or upset?

- (1) ☐ Very much.
- (2) ☐ Some -enough to bother me.
- (3) ☐ A little bit.
- (4) ☐ Not at all.

☐ (64)

57. During the past month, have you felt downhearted and blue?

- (1) ☐ All of the time.
- (2) ☐ A good bit of the time.
- (3) ☐ Some of the time
- (4) ☐ None of the time .

☐ (65)

## □ PART E

READ EACH ITEM BELOW AND INDICATE TO WHAT DEGREE YOU FEEL THE STATEMENT IS CHARACTERISTIC OF YOU. PLEASE USE THE FOLLOWING RESPONSE SCALE:

1	2	3	4	5
COMPLETELY TRUE	MOSTLY TRUE	NEITHER TRUE NOR FALSE	MOSTLY FALSE	COMPLETELY FALSE
58. I am a healthy person.			<input type="checkbox"/>	(66)
59. I am a physically attractive person.			<input type="checkbox"/>	(67)
60. I don't hold up too well under stress.			<input type="checkbox"/>	(68)
61. I am envious of those better looking than myself			<input type="checkbox"/>	(69)
62. I like to look neat and nice all the time.			<input type="checkbox"/>	(70)
63. I am full of aches and pains.			<input type="checkbox"/>	(71)
64. I have attractive facial features.			<input type="checkbox"/>	(72)
65. I have excellent reflexes.			<input type="checkbox"/>	(73)
66. I am not as attractive as most other people.			<input type="checkbox"/>	(74)
67. I am a good weight for a person my height.			<input type="checkbox"/>	(75)
68. I like my looks just the way they are.			<input type="checkbox"/>	(76)
69. I would be liked more if I were more attractive.			<input type="checkbox"/>	(77)
70. I would like to change some parts of my body.			<input type="checkbox"/>	(78)
71. I don't feel as well as I should.			<input type="checkbox"/>	(79)
72. I am uncomfortable when with others who are better looking.			<input type="checkbox"/>	(80)
73. I am the right height for my sex.			<input type="checkbox"/>	(1)
74. I do not have much "sex-appeal" with the opposite sex.			<input type="checkbox"/>	(2)
75. I have a tendency to be "accident prone".			<input type="checkbox"/>	(3)
76. I take good care of myself physically.			<input type="checkbox"/>	(4)
77. I have never felt socially excluded due to my appearance.			<input type="checkbox"/>	(5)
78. I often act like I am "all thumbs."			<input type="checkbox"/>	(6)
79. I am popular with the opposite sex.			<input type="checkbox"/>	(7)
80. I feel good most of the time.			<input type="checkbox"/>	(8)
81. I do well in sports and games.			<input type="checkbox"/>	(9)

## **□ PART F**

CONSIDER EACH STATEMENT BELOW AND INDICATE TO WHAT EXTENT YOU WOULD AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH EACH ONE. USE THE FOLLOWING SCALE FOR YOUR RESPONSES.

**1 = STRONGLY AGREE**

**2 = AGREE**

**3 = DISAGREE**

**4 = STRONGLY DISAGREE**

- |   |                          |      |
|---|--------------------------|------|
| 82. I have excellent reflexes.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | (10) |
| 83. I am not agile and graceful.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | (11) |
| 84. My physique is rather strong.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | (12) |
| 85. I can't run fast.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | (13) |
| 86. I don't feel in control when I take tests involving physical dexterity.             | <input type="checkbox"/> | (14) |
| 87. I have poor muscle tone.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | (15) |
| 88. I take little pride in my ability in sports.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | (16) |
| 89. My speed has helped me out of some tight spots.                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | (17) |
| 90. I have a strong grip.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | (18) |
| 91. Because of my agility I have been able to do things which many others could not do. | <input type="checkbox"/> | (19) |

## □ PART G .

THIS QUESTIONNAIRE IS A SERIES OF ATTITUDE STATEMENTS. READ EACH STATEMENT CAREFULLY, THEN INDICATE THE EXTENT TO WHICH EACH STATEMENT IS CHARACTERISTIC OF YOU. USE THE FOLLOWING SCALE FOR YOUR RESPONSES.

1 = NOT AT ALL CHARACTERISTIC OF ME

2= NOT VERY CHARACTERISTIC OF ME.

3= SLIGHTLY CHARACTERISTIC OF ME.

4= FAIRLY CHARACTERISTIC OF ME.

5= VERY MUCH CHARACTERISTIC OF ME.

- |  |                          |      |
|--|--------------------------|------|
| 92. I am not likely to speak to people until they speak to me.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | (20) |
| 93. I would describe myself as socially unskilled.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | (21) |
| 94. I frequently find it difficult to defend my point of view when confronted with the opinions of others. | <input type="checkbox"/> | (22) |
| 95. I would be willing to describe myself as a pretty "strong" personality.                                | <input type="checkbox"/> | (23) |
| 96. When I work in a group I like to take charge of things.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | (24) |
| 97. I would describe as self-confident.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | (25) |
| 98. I usually expect to succeed in the things I do.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | (26) |
| 99. I feel confident of my appearance.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | (27) |
| 100. I am a good mixer.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | (28) |
| 101. I feel comfortable approaching someone in a position of authority over me.                            | <input type="checkbox"/> | (29) |
| 102. I enjoy being around other people, and seek out social encounters frequently.                         | <input type="checkbox"/> | (30) |
| 103. When in a group of people, I have trouble thinking of the right things to say.                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | (31) |
| 104. When in a group of people , I usually do what the others want rather than make suggestions.           | <input type="checkbox"/> | (32) |

- |   |                          |      |
|---|--------------------------|------|
| 105. When I am in disagreement with other people, my opinion usually wins out.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | (33) |
| 106. I feel confident of my social behaviour.                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | (34) |
| 107. I feel I can confidently approach and deal with anyone I meet.             | <input type="checkbox"/> | (35) |
| 108. I would describe myself as one who attempts to master situations.          | <input type="checkbox"/> | (36) |
| 109. I would describe myself as happy.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | (37) |
| 110. Other people look up to me.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | (38) |
| 111. I enjoy being in front of large audiences.                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | (39) |
| 112. When I meet a stranger, I often think that he/she is better than me.       | <input type="checkbox"/> | (40) |
| 113. I enjoy social gatherings just to be with people.                          | <input type="checkbox"/> | (41) |
| 114. It is hard for me to start a conversation with strangers.                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | (42) |
| 115. People seem naturally to turn to me when decisions have to be made.        | <input type="checkbox"/> | (43) |
| 116. I make a point of looking other people in the eye.                         | <input type="checkbox"/> | (44) |
| 117. I feel secure in social situations.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | (45) |
| 118. I like to exert my influence over other people.                            | <input type="checkbox"/> | (46) |
| 119. I cannot seem to get others to notice me.                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | (47) |
| 120. I would rather not have very much responsibility for other people.         | <input type="checkbox"/> | (48) |
| 121. I feel comfortable being approached by someone in a position of authority. | <input type="checkbox"/> | (49) |
| 122. I would describe myself as indecisive.                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | (50) |
| 123. I have no doubts about my social competence.                               | <input type="checkbox"/> | (51) |

## **□ PART H**

**BELOW ARE STATEMENTS ABOUT HOW MEMBERS OF YOUR FAMILY REACT TOWARDS YOU OR EACH OTHER. AFTER EACH STATEMENT, INDICATE HOW MUCH YOU AGREE THAT THE STATEMENT IS TRUE OF SOMEONE IN YOUR FAMILY. USE THE SCALE BELOW TO RECORD YOUR RESPONSES.**

**1 = STRONGLY DISAGREE**

**2 = DISAGREE**

**3 = SLIGHTLY DISAGREE**

**4 = NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE**

**5 = SLIGHTLY AGREE**

**6 = AGREE**

**7 = STRONGLY AGREE**

- |  |                          |      |
|--|--------------------------|------|
| 124. Someone in my family helps me when I need it.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | (52) |
| 125. Someone in my family tells me there are certain TV shows or movies I can't watch because they're not good for me. | <input type="checkbox"/> | (53) |
| 126. Someone in my family encourages me to spend my free time the way I would like to.                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | (54) |
| 127. Someone in my family checks out the kind of friends I hang around with.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | (55) |
| 128. People in my family criticize each other.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | (56) |
| 129. Someone in my family likes when I do things the way I want to do them.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | (57) |
| 130. Someone in my family tells me there are certain places I can't go on my own.                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | (58) |
| 131. People in my family solve problems by fighting.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | (59) |
| 132. Someone in my family takes time to talk about things that are important to me.                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | (60) |
| 133. Someone in my family tells me that what I have to say is important  | <input type="checkbox"/> | (61) |

- |   |                          |      |
|---|--------------------------|------|
| 134. Someone in my family will help me with my personal problems.                             | <input type="checkbox"/> | (62) |
| 135. People in my family get real mad about things that are really stupid                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | (63) |
| 136. Someone in my family cares about how my day went at school.                              | <input type="checkbox"/> | (64) |
| 137. If I go somewhere after school, I have to tell someone in my family<br>where I am going. | <input type="checkbox"/> | (65) |
| 138. I can always turn to someone in my family for help.                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | (66) |
| 139. Someone in my family encourages me to make my own decisions.                             | <input type="checkbox"/> | (67) |
| 140. Someone in my family shows that he/she really cares about me.                            | <input type="checkbox"/> | (68) |
| 141. Someone in my family encourages me to talk about how I see things.                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | (69) |
| 142. There's a lot of yelling and fighting in my family .                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | (70) |
| 143. Someone in my family helps me to choose my own way of<br>doing things.                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | (71) |
| 144. Someone in my family keeps a close eye on me.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | (72) |
| 145. People in my family really get on each other's nerves.                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | (73) |
| 146. People in my family can go on fighting for a long time.                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | (74) |
| 147. Someone in my family makes sure that I don't stay up too late at night.                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | (75) |

## □ PART I

### HOW IMPORTANT DO YOU REGARD THE FOLLOWING VALUES?

VERY IMPORTANT    6   5   4   3   2   1   NOT IMPORTANT

- |                     |                          |      |
|---------------------|--------------------------|------|
| 148. HAPPINESS      | <input type="checkbox"/> | (76) |
| 149. OBEDIENCE      | <input type="checkbox"/> | (77) |
| 150. RESPONSIBILITY | <input type="checkbox"/> | (78) |
| 151. HONESTY        | <input type="checkbox"/> | (79) |
| 152. PERSEVERANCE   | <input type="checkbox"/> | (80) |
| 153. POPULARITY     | <input type="checkbox"/> | (1)  |

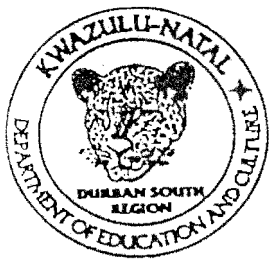
154. HELPFULNESS	<input type="checkbox"/>	(2)
155. FREEDOM	<input type="checkbox"/>	(3)
156. FRIENDSHIP	<input type="checkbox"/>	(4)
157. SELF-RESPECT	<input type="checkbox"/>	(5)
158. LOVE	<input type="checkbox"/>	(6)
159. AMBITION	<input type="checkbox"/>	(7)
160. KNOWLEDGE	<input type="checkbox"/>	(8)
161. COMPETENCE	<input type="checkbox"/>	(9)
162.FORGIVENESS	<input type="checkbox"/>	(10)
163. INDEPENDENCE	<input type="checkbox"/>	(11)
164. SELF-CONTROL	<input type="checkbox"/>	(12)
165. BRAVERY	<input type="checkbox"/>	(13)
166.SECURITY	<input type="checkbox"/>	(14)
167.PEACE ( HARMONY)	<input type="checkbox"/>	(15)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION



## **APPENDIX B**

**LETTER FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION GRANTING PERMISSION TO USE  
SCHOOL PUPILS IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT.**



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE  
UMNYANGO WEMFUNDO NAMASIKO  
DEPARTEMENT VAN ONDERWYS EN KULTUUR

Province of KwaZulu-Natal / Isifundazwe saKwaZulu-Natal / Provinsie KwaZulu-Natal

Malgate Building  
72 Stanger Street  
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Telephone No. : 031-3270911  
Facsimile No. : 031 - 3270244 / 3270465

Enq. : M.H. Aboobaker  
Tel. No. : (031) 3270481 / 551

**DURBAN SOUTH**

Private Bag X54330  
Durban  
4000

24 February 1998

Mr R.S. Budhal  
Acting Principal  
Cliffdale Primary School  
P.O. Box 30045  
c/o CLIFFDALE  
HAMMARSDALE  
3700

Dear Mr Budhal

**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH :**  
**D.ED. DEGREE**

Your fax dated 1997-12-19 received by my office on 1998-02-20 refers.

Permission is granted to you to conduct research in the 3 primary and 3 high schools of the Durban South Region mentioned in your letter, subject to the following conditions :-

1. Prior notice is given to the Principal of each school before your visit.
2. The Principal of the school is consulted and approves your visit to the school.

A feedback from you at the end of your research will be appreciated.

I take this opportunity of wishing you well in your endeavours.

Kind regards

**M.H. ABOOBAKER**  
**DIRECTOR : EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES**  
**DURBAN SOUTH REGION**